The Diefenbaker Moment

By

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Abstract

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This thesis locates John G. Diefenbaker’s electoral triumphs in the general elections of 1957 and 1958 and his subsequent world tour within the context of the revival of Conservative nationalism in the postwar period. To make his case against a Liberal government that had been in power for twenty-two years, Diefenbaker had to engage the public in a response to political events based on an appreciation of an abstract and not quite palpable threat to democracy and a national way of life. He did so by harnessing the persuasive techniques of public relations and the new medium of television—a powerful combination that Diefenbaker knew could most effectively tell and sell a national narrative. The signature he settled on was the “New National Policy.” The choice harkened back to a discourse of Conservative nationalism that spoke of the antiquity of his party ideology and rediscovered the heroes who founded the nation. The “New National Policy” was a therapeutic ethos designed to assuage voters’ fears about mass consumption, continentalism, communism, and the end of empire: it ensured that the greatness of events and men of the past could guarantee the ideas and values of the present; it was gendered in its construction of patriotic manhood, exalted motherhood, and icons of nationalist ideology; it was transnational in scope; it told of a relation of cause-and-effect that resembled a theory of history more than a blueprint for public policy; it was fashioned to disarm critical analysis because it conformed to the structures and traditions of storytelling and the clichés of historical memory.
This thesis makes three interrelated arguments. First, it argues that the systems of values and meanings on which Diefenbaker drew cannot be understood by analyzing his personal foibles or tracing his rise and fall through a series of events. Partisan narratives are built out of the dialectical interchange between warring political ideologies and are stories fitted to character, circumstance, and experience. Second, it suggests that Diefenbaker was a transitional figure whose vision, message, leadership style, and public relations campaign seemed to best fit the barely discernable dimensions of the political and cultural change of the immediate postwar decades. Finally, by examining resurgence of Conservative nationalism in the context of imperial decline, it seeks to show that partisan narratives in English Canada in the 1960s cannot be understood outside of the larger transnational contexts in which they emerged.
To my parents

JOAN AND PAUL SPITTAL
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It must be said that I have spent long hours babbling about “the Diefenbaker Moment” to more than a few weary listeners. Friends and family have listened patiently, colleagues have offered advice, and librarians and archivists have handed me wonderful, dusty books. To all I am deeply grateful.

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Introduction—The Diefenbaker Moment

There is a memo buried deep in John G. Diefenbaker’s private papers, no doubt written on his whistle-stop tour of Canada during the federal election of 1957, which I have kept constantly in mind from the beginning of my research into his life and times. Diefenbaker was known for assembling and reading speeches from loose leaf scraps of paper that he crammed into file folders and pulled out at the last minute, depending on the mood of the crowd. On some bits of paper there were quotations attributed to Edmund Burke on history, tradition, and the moral moorings of “the good society.” On others there were statistics about the extent to which wheat farmers were struggling to make a living in the Prairies. Yet the memo entitled “Colony or Nation?” was marked by a striking sense of urgency, as if the nation’s very existence hinged on the delivery of its contents.

There is good reason to believe that the contents of the memo were recycled hundreds of times as Diefenbaker crisscrossed the country delivering one barn-burning speech after another. By the late 1950s, the Liberal party was being attacked from both sides of the political spectrum for its “laissez-faire” policies of economic integration with the United States and what many viewed as a cunning strategy to slowly expunge Canada’s Commonwealth ties. The Liberals were being criticized, too, for being the kind of technocratic managers who were willing to bypass the parliamentary process in order to implement their continentalist agenda. Sensing a turn in the tide that would embrace Conservative nationalism, Diefenbaker sought to re-polarize politics along ideological lines. “I have spoken of our New National Policy and our heritage,” he

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2 “Colony or Nation”: JGDP MG 01/XII/A/380.2.

said, most likely in an exaggeratedly solemn tone, “of our nationhood, unity, and freedom. I
have told you what Liberal policy most surely implies.” To him, the choice between “Liberalism,
an ideology that would make Canada an economic colony of the United States,” and
“Conservatism, a philosophy that would make Canada a nation in the fullest and most
responsible sense of the word” was “quite simply the choice between colony or nation.” “It is a
choice,” he contended, “between one unified nation respecting individual freedom and
parliamentary institutions, or a divided people engulfed by STATISM and losing by degrees their
sovereignty and freedom.” “My fellow Canadians,” he asked, “which course will you choose?”

Diefenbaker often invoked the fighting words of Winston Churchill to drive his
arguments home: “‘we have not journeyed,’ said Churchill, ‘all this way across the centuries,
across the oceans, across the mountains, across the prairies, because we are made of sugar
candy.’” “Indeed, we have not,” Diefenbaker agreed, seconding the conflation of manliness,
imperialism, and nationhood. “Like me,” he insisted, “there are millions of Canadians who
would not sell their national birthright for the spurious benefits of a temporary boom.” In times
like these, Diefenbaker argued that citizens and patriots had to rise up and recognize the qualities
of a true, national leader. Because, as in any righteous war or political battle, to love one’s
country and to possess the virtue and patriotism needed to defend it was “the necessary condition
of national survival.”

Before taking a final bow, Diefenbaker sometimes left his listeners with poetic
affirmations with which they were familiar. “In your hearts,” he said, mustering up his most
evangelical tone, “I know you feel the meaning of those words of Conan Doyle:”

My life is gliding downward, it speeds
swifter to the day
When it shoots the last dark canyon
to the Plains of Faraway;

4 “Colony or Nation”: JGDP MG 01/XII/A/380.2.
5 Ibid.
But while its streams are running
through the years that are to be,
The Mighty Voice of Canada will ever call to me.\(^6\)

Diefenbaker’s memo, and the myriad speeches in which its contents were probably incorporated, tells the story of an ideological battle for the soul of Canada and a fight for its survival as a sovereign nation. Hailed as citizens and patriots were Canadians who recognized that the country was in peril and would turn against the technocratic Liberal Leviathan to vote for a true national leader and the only nation-building political party. Like an Old Testament prophet crossed with a televangelist’s taste for celebrity, Diefenbaker invoked the perennial themes of good versus evil, virtue versus vice, and used the heroic language of battle to carry the plot along. His oratorical skills and messianic tone have been highlighted by supporters and detractors alike. Yet it was the contents, style, and delivery of his message that admittedly appealed to me. Diefenbaker’s narrative of Conservatism, the themes of nation-building, history, tradition, the Commonwealth, and the heritage of parliamentary freedom so intrinsic to it seemed far more romantic than a Liberalism that spoke of sound technocratic management and steady as we go government.

At this point I decided to test a hypothesis that has never been tested before, for the most part because critics tend to read Diefenbaker’s speeches as empty hyperbole.\(^7\) It occurred to me that the nationalistic, partisan, and even heroic vision of Canada jotted down in this short memo had a history that began long before Diefenbaker’s electoral victories of 1957 and 1958. It struck me, too, that running parallel with Diefenbaker’s political fortunes and navigation of the cultural, intellectual, political, and economic landscape of the immediate postwar period was a

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moment in Canadian history in which many people were just as insecure and pensive about themselves and about nation, its identity, and its survival, as Diefenbaker was himself.

In the twenty years following the Second World War, representations of national identity were undergoing a deep transformation. The dismantling of the British Empire, the rise of the United States as a superpower, the threat of Soviet Russia, not to mention increased prosperity, demographic change, immigration, religious decline, and the arrival of mass consumption, and mass culture state created an ontological void that was consistently being addressed in the popular press, on the radio, in the ivory towers of universities, in the House of Parliament, and reflected in public opinion polls. The need to fashion new narratives of national identity in English-speaking Canada—or perhaps re-cast older ones to meet the national and international challenges of the postwar world—became the order of the day. It was in this light that I began to examine Diefenbaker’s career, his life and his life’s work, with an eye that looked beyond the man, his ego, high politics, and instead focused on a particular narrative of Canada and its application at that specific moment in time.

More often than not, the books written about Diefenbaker by academics, journalists, pundits, and politicians portray him as a messianic prophet from the prairies who, in succumbing to delusions of grandeur, failed to deliver on his promises of national greatness and ontological

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certitude. For most, Diefenbaker might have possessed many political gifts but he was a failed leader with an idealistic, impractical vision of Canada and the Commonwealth that was a throwback to the Victorian era—one which could never be realized in a modern, postwar world. The political platform of the Progressive Conservatives, they maintain, was merely a twisted and incompetent version of that of the Liberals. There was no viable alternative to Liberalism in postwar Canada, they argue. The last bastions of Conservatism and even Socialism in North America had been subsumed by the postwar, Liberal consensus. Alternative partisan narratives had been reduced to insignificance because “liberal” democracy and capitalism had triumphed. Diefenbaker, they argued, could not alter the nation’s Whiggish trajectory by turning back the clock and glorifying colonial times gone by.9

Since Diefenbaker failed to implement his Conservative vision and follow through on his plan to reinvigorate Canada’s ties to the Commonwealth, and because his leadership fell so far short of voter’s expectations and his government imploded, critics have been interested in little other than the causes of his failures. There is nothing illegitimate about this, except that our knowledge of the outcome makes it difficult to enter into the minds of the people living in Canada at the time and particularly those who did not know that, in voting for Diefenbaker and his vision, they might have been supporting a lost cause. It also precludes us from seeing the past in all its unpredictability and complexity and understanding exactly why, for a brief shining moment, Diefenbaker and the message he delivered seemed so relevant and timely. As the American literary historian, Vernon Parrington rightly contended: “time is not always a just winnower and history is partial to success.” Lost causes “have a way of shrinking in importance

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in the memory of later generations” and it is necessary for the historian to “go back to the days before their overthrow and view them in light of their hopes.”

To be sure, many books have been written in support of Diefenbaker over the years—both before and after his fall from power. Most of these are of the Trumpets and Drums variety. They glorify him as a citizen-patriot and praise his oratorical genius, political cunning, sense of humour, and nationalist fervour. As entertaining as these books are, however, they rarely get to the nub of the problem: where did Diefenbaker find the language with which to articulate his national and international policies? How did he frame historical and modern connections between manliness and Conservative nationalism? By what means was his partisan narrative of Canada forged as a political weapon and wielded in the heat of battle? Who was responsible for creating Diefenbaker’s image? In what ways was his public persona effectively packaged and sold to the public? How far did message reflect public concerns about mass culture and mass consumption? To what extent was Diefenbaker’s narrative shaped by Canada’s geopolitical position in the postwar period, especially with regards the end of empire? Looking beyond the attempted coup undertaken by some of his own colleagues in 1963, his failed leadership and allegedly all-consuming ego, how did Diefenbaker become a political superstar, achieve such massive electoral success, and at what point did it all go downhill?

Convinced that I would uncover the secrets of Diefenbaker’s political fortunes that had either been ignored by critics or glossed over by well-meaning friends, I travelled to the Diefenbaker Centre in Saskatchewan intent on taking a different approach to reading his papers.

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11 For books about Diefenbaker’s inspirational leadership and political genius, see Lanny Boutin, John Diefenbaker: The Outsider Who Refused to Quit (Toronto: Jackfruit Press, 2006); Arthur Slade, John Diefenbaker: An Appointment With Destiny (Toronto: XYZ Publisher, 2001); Donald Clarke Story, R. Bruce Shepard, eds., The Diefenbaker Legacy: Canadian Politics, Law, and Society Since 1957 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1998); Dick Spencer, Trumpets and Drums (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1994); Thad McIlroy, Remembering the Chief (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1984); Tom Van Dusen, The Chief (Toronto: Russell Publishing, 1968).
I began to read Diefenbaker’s speeches, campaign materials, the stories he told about himself, and the nation in search of enduring themes and questions that pointed towards some larger, national preoccupation. As I travelled across the country, to Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Kingston and Halifax, and over to Britain, I conducted interviews with journalists, academics, and politicians who were Diefenbaker’s contemporaries, visiting numerous archives along the way. I looked and listened for themes that surfaced again and again in his papers in an effort to understand what people were thinking about themselves, about Canada, and about the world at the time—and what, if anything, did it all have to do with the ideas, public persona, and political career of John G. Diefenbaker?

“The Diefenbaker Moment” is a phrase to be interpreted in two ways. In the first place, it denotes the moment and the manner in which John G. Diefenbaker made his appearance on the national and international political stage; and here the reader is asked to remember that this is not a biography of Diefenbaker nor is it a project designed to chronicle the series of events and clash of personalities that led to his dramatic fall from power. The “moment” in question accounts for the fashioning of his public persona, the stories he told, their origins, the historical dimensions in which they were framed, and the means by which they were modernized, re-constituted, publicized, and distributed. It is asserted that changes going on in Canadian social and political life after the Second World War produced a problem in English Canada’s historical and self understanding with which Diefenbaker and his contemporaries were both explicitly and implicitly contending. Their struggle with this problem is presented as one selected aspect of the complex historical reality of their thought; and their “moment” is defined as that in which they confronted the problem grown crucial.

In the second place, “the Diefenbaker Moment” denotes the problem itself. It is named for a moment in which, for many Canadians, the nation was attempting to remain morally and
politically stable in a stream of events that were thought to have disrupted all systems of security and stability. The language that Diefenbaker and his contemporaries developed for the purpose of confronting this stream of rapid change was spoken in terms of a historical confrontation of “Liberalism” with “Conservatism,” “laissez-faire” technocratic management and “continentalism,” with robust “National Policies,” and was posed as an ontological choice of “colony” or “nation.” “The Diefenbaker Moment” examines how, throughout the 1950s, Diefenbaker and a number of Conservative intellectuals and politicians uncovered and repurposed the old Tory narrative and myth of the National Policy as a therapeutic ethos that stressed national self-realization through dynamic, nationalist policies and muscular leadership. Although Diefenbaker was one among many Conservative partisans engrossed in the common pursuit of this problem, the moment is named for him because of what he did with it during the general elections of 1957 and 1958, and his attempt to re-align Canada’s external policies with those of the Commonwealth.

The object of “the Diefenbaker Moment” is to trace the development of the system of mythic and ideological formulations that constituted Diefenbaker’s Conservative narrative in the immediate postwar period, to offer a critical interpretation of its meanings, and to assess its power in shaping political outcomes. By giving a historical account of the use and periodic revision of the symbolic language of Conservatism, I hope to explain the broad appeal and persuasive power of a partisan narrative that was capable of varied and complex uses and in different contexts; that was made up of keywords, metaphors, and symbols that were forged in the heat of battle with its political foes; that served with equal facility the requirements of academic historiography, journalists, and public relations gurus; that was rooted in history but capable of transcending the limitations of a specific temporality, to speak with as much comparable authority and intelligibility to Victorians as those living in a modern industrial
world; that was gendered in its construction of patriotic manhood and exalted motherhood and icons of nationalist ideology; that originated in tales told by, for, and about White “Anglo-Saxon” British and Protestant heroes, but which, under Diefenbaker’s leadership, attempted to become a broad and inclusive narrative that was better reflective of the pluralistic society that Canada had become.

Indeed for both the Tories and the Grits, historic nation-building narratives were the foundations on which they could construct images of party leaders, principles, and philosophies for the purpose of connecting partisan messages with national dreams and anxieties about change held by their audiences. Their partisan narratives were made up of metaphors, syntactical patterns, and verbal and visual vocabularies that formed a community of discourse, a collection of stories which would be familiar to an otherwise diverse audience. As Margaret Somers suggests, telling stories about ourselves, the communities that we live in and the relationships that we have is “an ontological condition of social life.” According to Somers, people construct multiple and changing identities by locating themselves in a repertoire of stories; their experience is constituted through narrative; and they are guided to behave in certain ways on the basis of ideas they derive from the social, political, and cultural narratives available to them. On a much larger scale, partisan narratives like Diefenbaker’s—and those of his political enemies—embedded identities in historical and geographical relationships and provided the ideal evaluative frameworks against which the two leading political parties defined imagined principles and values. 12 When it comes to politics in English Canada, national narratives are created for partisan purposes and organized in ways that reflect the specific sets of principles and values that are historically associated with each political party. And like any other cultural product, when it comes to creating a nation-building narrative the end goal is to associate it with

a message and to sell that message in such a way as to have it occupy the mainstream of national political discourse.

Diefenbaker’s Conservatism was developed within the historical dimension and in this he had some help. Underlying the rhetoric used in the campaigns he waged in 1957 and 1958 was a story of Canada in which Conservatives and Liberals were at constant war with one another. It was a story that had been produced by political thinkers and politicians since the nineteenth century out of the dialectical interchange between Conservatism and Liberalism. The storytellers in question did not attempt to gauge history or unjust government by any real or ideal principles of reason or law but rather looked beneath institutions and legislatures in order to uncover Canada’s “true” history and locate themselves and their partisan mantra within it. In the face of a potentially limitless array of experiences deriving from social contact with events, institutions, and people, the evaluative capacity of what Somers calls “emplotment” demands and enables selective appropriation in constructing narratives. As Somers explains, “to make something understandable in the context of a narrative is to give it historicity and relationality. This works…because when events are located in a temporal and sequential plot we can then explain their relationships to other events, stories, histories.”

In this way, stories about the historically antagonistic relationship between Liberals and Conservatives became the markers or “signs” by which the two parties and their leaders could be made easily recognized by the public.

This dissertation locates the origins of Diefenbaker’s narrative in the Conservative version of history and shows how it was forged for the express purpose of combating its Liberal “other.” It suggests that in each partisan narrative, historical events were selectively processed into episodes; contemporary stories were connected to well-worn plots; people were associated with famous characters and personalities; and groups of ideas were formed into historic and

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13 Ibid., 617.
competing ideologies. Together they fashioned the myth/ideologies which shaped the storyteller’s partisan identity, determined the manner in which their story was told, and inspired the content of the narrative itself.

Seen from this angle, Diefenbaker’s Conservatism should not be examined in isolation but rather as a product of a long struggle with the Liberal “other.” At mid-century, the problem for the Tories in English Canada was that only one political party and one version of Canadian history occupied the centre of national political discourse. By the time Diefenbaker walked onto the national political stage, the Liberal Party had been in power for over twenty years. It had been in power when Canada emerged from the Great Depression into the modern welfare state, when the basis for a new relationship between government and business was achieved, and when the economic and social foundations of a transformed federalism were built. The nation-building narrative of Canada’s journey from a British colony to an independent, North American nation had, as the Conservative-leaning historian Donald Creighton put it, been perfected by a “generation of [Liberal] publicists, journalists, and professors—the Canadian nationalists of the 1930s—who arose to extol the sufficiency and normality of North Americanism.” The Liberal narrative was so deeply entrenched in the success story of postwar Canada that the two could be seen as one and the same.

It is in this context that the conscious political strategy of the Progressive Conservative Party to open public memory, recuperate pieces of the forgotten past, and expose and replace the Liberal narrative of Canadian history should be examined. Michel Foucault has argued that “power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed

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with; it is the name one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.”

By analyzing the relationship of power and resistance in the strategic form of struggle, we can see that the narratives which Liberals and Conservatives told and sold were ones of ongoing hostilities, conquest, and domination. In this ever shifting field of battle, “politics is war by other means.” Viewed in this way, in order to establish itself as a subject of history the political party must gain a new self-awareness; it must trace the sources of knowledge and memory back to founding principles and create a common cause; it must denounce all other versions of history to show that its narrative was and still is the only true vision of the nation worth struggling for; and it must use truth as a weapon for partisan victory, as evidence that theirs’ is the only “blood that has dried on the codes.”

The political party that wins the day is the one with the national narrative which manages to undercut all others by occupying the hallowed ground of mainstream political discourse, and, in so doing, effectively shapes or re-shapes the story of Canada to fit its own partisan values and political goals.

Thus while “the Diefenbaker Moment” focuses on the making, telling, and selling of Conservatism in the immediate postwar period and the careful crafting of Diefenbaker’s public persona both at home and abroad, the study begins with an examination of the historic and transatlantic dimensions of Conservatism. Chapter One explores the use and periodic revision of warring Liberal and Conservative narratives in English Canada, tracing them back through to their transatlantic origins. In the immediate postwar decades, political thinkers and politicians made a point of calling on the thought of their philosophical forefathers as a means of legitimating their rhetoric and actions. Perceiving themselves in the midst of a period of political

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18 Ibid., 269.
stasis, they called on the symbols, traditions, and nation-building visions of their intellectual predecessors to re-polarize political discourse along partisan lines.

Chapter Two shows that it is precisely because Conservatives and Liberals found common ground in the implementation of welfare state measures that heated battles in the House of Commons were focused on national symbols, philosophical differences, and questions of national identity. Throughout the 1950s, a growing dialogue between Conservative politicians and intellectuals emerged as they attempted to polarize political discourse along partisan lines by highlighting the bankruptcy of the postwar variant of Liberalism and suggesting Conservatism as a remedy. What mattered to these Tories were not concerns over the so-called “end of ideology,” the fine points of Liberal policy, or even its general implementation but rather the re-establishment of a relationship of partisan warfare.

If they work, national narratives can play a significant role in establishing the frames of reference and perceptions of contemporary audiences. They are meant to organize outlooks behind a particular cause. They have the potential to command time and space by imaginatively reconstructing the historical experience. They are designed to inform people who they are in relation to the nation and its past, what a true Canadian citizen is, what a Liberal is and what a Conservative is. They can constitute the patriot and hail the individual as citizen, voter, nation-builder, and even as a consumer in ways that affect how people understand politics, the world around them, and how they behave in the marketplace. They can change shapes and relay different kinds of messages depending on the means by which they are communicated. They can soothe an audience confronted with the problem of ontological instability and be the bulwark behind which the powerful can shore up their defences against the incursion of other narratives, whether they come from home, say from Quebec nationalists, or abroad from the United States or Russia.
The next two chapters deal specifically with the mechanisms by which Diefenbaker achieved his electoral triumphs in the general elections of 1957 and 1958. They examine the myths and stories drawn from Canadian history which, through persistent usage by intellectual contemporaries, acquired the power of symbolizing Conservative ideology and dramatizing Canada’s moral consciousness—with all the complexities and contradictions that consciousness may contain. Chapter Three reveals Diefenbaker as the lucky inheritor of the new, more dynamic and “progressive” Conservative national narrative developed through the periodic struggles of the 1940s and 50s and a set of political circumstances which pointed to the potential of a Tory revival. As we shall see, it was the means by which Diefenbaker told and sold the Conservative narrative that put him over the edge. The willingness of his public relations team to experiment with a diversity of persuasive strategies and try their hand at building a leadership cult that suited the black and white, good versus evil scenarios of television drama and inspired the creation of a pan-Canadian narrative that was new to Canadian politics.

Chapter Four takes a closer look at this turning point in Canadian politics in which, for the first time in Canadian history, the leader’s image became the focal point of a political campaign. It connects the signs and symbols of Conservative narratives past were revived by Diefenbaker and his contemporaries—an “historic” rendering of Sir John A. Macdonald, in particular—and used to the fashion his political platform. Drawing on the myth and legend of Macdonald, Diefenbaker invited Canadians to share in a pan-Canadian policy that would infuse the nation with a new sense of purpose and literally and figuratively unite Canada’s disparate provinces. The “New National Policy” was fashioned by Diefenbaker and his team as a resonant symbol, a tool consciously designed to justify action on the stage of historical conflict. The interplay of masculinity and nationhood figured prominently in Diefenbaker’s campaigns, in
which he was depicted as a cowboy riding in from the margins to fight technocratic desk jockeys, ivory tower Liberals, and the even the Bay Street Tory establishment.

Chapters Five and Six examine these Conservative partisan values in the context of conceptions of Conservative womanhood and Canada’s connection to the Crown and Commonwealth. Chapter Five explores the political activism of women within Conservative politics and suggests that contemporary ideas of gender legitimized and informed constructions of Conservative womanhood in English Canada. It suggests that over the 1950s, a schism developed between “club women,” whose political activism was carried out within the framework of the Progressive Conservative Women’s Association, and “party women” who pursued careers as Members of Parliament and professionals within the mainstream party organization. These two competing notions of how to be Conservative women activists mirrored the divisions which would later separate maternal feminists from those of the Second Wave feminist movement. Despite their disagreements on how to engage in party politics, Conservative women were united behind the partisan narrative that developed in the immediate postwar decades and, through their activism at all levels of government, had a hand in shaping the way that the Tory narrative was told and sold.

Chapter 6 examines postwar Conservatism, and Diefenbaker’s iteration of it, as a product of the end of empire. Although there were many Tories who subscribed to a Canadian citizenship based on ethnic conceptions of Britishness, Diefenbaker was one of a number of Conservatives at the time, both within and outside Canada, who conceived of the Commonwealth as an instrument of imperial internationalism and soft power influence. His “New National Policy” which touted the concept of “One-unhyphenated Canada” was transposed onto an idea that he developed about the Commonwealth as a diverse group of nations united by the Common bond of British parliamentary democracy and liberalism. The chapter ends with the
suggestion that Diefenbaker’s attempts to fill the vacuum left by the old imperial tradition with a new one that better reflected pluralism within Canada and the changing currents of international affairs outside of it could not prevent the re-alignment of Canadian interests and its politics and culture with those the United States.

We now know that Diefenbaker was unable to implement his vision, unite the Progressive Conservative party behind it, and that his government imploded and his leadership style was deemed wholly inadequate by his peers. But Diefenbaker’s downfall does not make the study of “the Diefenbaker Moment” any less fruitful because it provides us with a more nuanced picture of political scenarios, both national and transnational, that Canadians thought possible in the immediate postwar decades; an idea of how television changed the structure of Canadian politics as early as the 1950s; a look into the ways in which Tory women were politically engaged, in both public and private, from the grassroots to the national level, as key contributors to the modern party machines and shapers and peddlers of the Conservative narrative. Not to be viewed in isolation, Diefenbaker’s Conservatism and his public persona were products of the time—forged in response to external factors that were out of his control and a war with a version of Liberalism over which, for a time, he unquestionably triumphed. In explicating the continuing dynamic between politics and myth, myth and popular culture, the goal of this dissertation is to shed new light on the importance of partisanship and the forging of partisan identities to the shaping of political discourse and outcomes in English Canada. It posits that so long as the nation-state remains the prevalent form of social organization, national myth/ideologies like the one told and sold by Diefenbaker and his supporters will be essential to its operations.
On 24 October 1952, John G. Diefenbaker delivered a speech to the graduating class of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario entitled, “Shall Human Freedom Survive?” With some urgency, the Member of Parliament for Prince Albert, Saskatchewan informed the new graduates that their tranquil and prosperous nation was under siege. Only by pursuing a career in the public service, he insisted, could they protect it. The high moral and democratic values of the British Parliamentary tradition and the Canadian way of life were being threatened by the twin evils of Soviet communism and McCarthyism in the United States. In both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., “attacks on freedom” were being waged “to control thought and the search for truth and to censor the ideas of university professors into mass educational uniformity.” Diefenbaker argued that censorship in both countries had “strangled freedom with its tyranny” while “traditions, the proven inheritance of centuries would be ruthlessly destroyed in a world of violence in the twilight of peace.” But “we in the British tradition,” he declared, assuredly knew “that history proves that free men enlisted under the standard of freedom will dare stand undaunted and will triumph in the end.”

Like any good storyteller, Diefenbaker had the ability to weave numerous storylines together in ways that compelled his listeners to locate themselves within them. He portrayed politics as a continuation of war by other means, pitting good against evil, light against dark, playing on the hopes and fears of his young audience. He spoke of the menace of Soviet imperialism; linked the encroachment on civil liberties in the United States to the tyranny associated with Soviet communism; and made claims about the danger posed by tendency of

20 Ibid., 69.
governments obsessed with technocratic management to sweep aside centuries of inherited British traditions on which Canada’s free and liberal democracy was built. A new generation of citizens, patriots, voters, and better yet, Progressive Conservatives, could be heroes in the ongoing struggle to defend the nation from this clear and present danger.

The art of good citizenship was not something one inherited at birth, however. In Diefenbaker’s eyes, “only through the influence of home, church, and education” could Canada produce “good citizens, spiritual standards, an understanding of democracy, and devotion to its practice.” In some countries, he argued, politics might be “looked upon by the cynical as the assured method to practice duplicity and demagoguery—and the U.S. elections leave no doubt of the truth of that view.” Canadians stood out in contrast as honest and selfless men and women who counted the public welfare as their first priority. Diefenbaker viewed politics as a “science, an art, a philosophy”; it was “the politician who shapes his country’s destiny with the materials which citizenship provides.” To him, human freedom could survive only if the spiritual concepts of liberty, church, citizenship, and community were protected by Conservative political leaders. Diefenbaker ended his speech with a quote from Edmund Burke: “All that is necessary to the triumph of Evil is that good men do nothing.” He interpreted Burke’s words as a call to duty for moral political leaders to cultivate a national spirit and communicate to the masses that there was a truer, moral ground on which to unite.

Underlying the speech is a bold juxtaposition of the British and Conservative tradition in Canada with the Soviet, American, and Liberal-Canadian “other.” Even at this early stage in his national, political career, Diefenbaker’s penchant for polarizing discourse and doomsday scenarios earned him a reputation for being a preaching prairie evangelical—a man who was all

21 Ibid., 71.
22 Ibid., 70.
23 Ibid., 71.
style and no substance. But people were listening. Indeed, by the early 1950s Diefenbaker was already conspicuous, a favourite in the press, and the most sought after public speaker in the Progressive Conservative party. As a member of the opposition, his speeches were intentionally contrarian and consciously written as high political drama. Canadian politics had been dominated by the Liberal party for over twenty years. By referring to politics and history in terms of war, he made a conscious effort to tap into the troubled psyches of his audiences and encouraged them to question the status quo. Diefenbaker regurgitated fragments of current intellectual and political debates about the hollow promises of postwar liberalism, the homogenizing potential of mass cultural and consumption, the vague dangers of cold, impersonal technocratic government, and the threats posed by Soviet and American imperialism to Canada. His relationship with the conservative intellectual community was complex, not least because of his self-conscious desire to be recognized as being part of it. However, that Diefenbaker was very much aware of debates going on at the time between Liberal and Conservative political thinkers about the English Canadian identity is evident in the contemporary themes and ideas on which his speeches and political rhetoric so often turned.

Ever the campaigner, Diefenbaker’s world-view was filtered through a partisan lens. It was a narrative born out of an epic, transatlantic, historic struggle with Liberalism, and to a lesser extent, Socialism. Deployed sometimes for the purpose of cultural criticism and at others as a partisan weapon, Conservative and Liberal partisans had fought long and hard for the middle ground of mainstream political discourse in English Canada. The signs and symbols they

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24 For more on Diefenbaker’s hyperbolic tendencies, see Peter C. Newman, *Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), xvi; Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 231; 591.
25 In 1953, aside from a manic ten-week period of election campaigning, Diefenbaker made more than thirty speeches in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario to service clubs, PC associations, and graduating classes. See Diefenbaker’s pocket diary for 1953: JGDP, III/24.312, 17217-310. See also Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 191.
developed over time and honed as weapons linked nation and citizen, community and individual, identity and action. It was out of this relationship of struggle that the public images and political rhetoric of leading Tories and Grits were born. Seen from this angle, Diefenbaker's political persona and polarizing partisan rhetoric did not emerge out of a political or ideological vacuum. Rather, he was a product of his time and of the processes through which political actors in English Canada produced the systems of values and meanings through which they explained and interpreted the world and themselves.

Scholars of political history in English Canada tend to downplay the semiotic dimension of politics. They have shed much needed light on the extent to which intra-party conflict wracked the Conservative party at mid-century and shown how economic self-interest, religious, and ethnic loyalties shaped its political fortunes. Yet little effort has been made on the part of traditional political historians to uncover how the Conservative partisan narrative was fashioned, track the ways it changed over time, and discern the extent to which it has shaped identities and determined political outcomes.

By combining the tools of social and cultural theory with more traditional political narratives and economic analysis, Ian McKay has attempted to reinvent the ways that historians approach the history of politics and intellectual thought in Canada. In the essay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” he argues that political historians must move past national historical syntheses and epic political narratives and embrace a new analytical framework. By studying “the Canadian Liberal Revolution,” a phrase he uses to depict the gradual deployment of a liberal order in the British colonies in North

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America, and later within the Canadian federation, beginning in 1840 and extending into the mid-twentieth century, McKay suggests that scholars could begin a true reconnaissance of Canadian history.28 “The Liberal Order Framework” has inspired a productive dialogue among historians whose interests lie in examining the dominant strains of political thought in English Canada. A number of them have highlighted the limitations of the singular “Liberal Revolution” identified by McKay and suggested instead that “variants of liberalism” historically operated in Canada, adjacent to the core principles of liberty, property, and equality. By subsuming Canadian political thought under the umbrella of even a qualified “dynamic” and “changing” liberalism, however, historians engaged in the debate fail to account for or enlarge our understanding of Conservative nationalism in Canada.29

To be sure, Conservatives and Liberals often behave the same when in power and have been known to switch policies promiscuously among themselves—the “National Policy” being a prime example. Yet the ways they have imagined themselves to be different are both conspicuous and pivotally meaningful.30 Liberals and Conservatives in postwar Canada employed, in different quantities, aspects of liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, and socialism in the fashioning of political platforms, partisan identities, ideas of citizenship, and the sense of political self. Accounting for the broad appeal and persuasive power of partisan narratives and


30 For a quick lesson on the ways in which fights over the National Policy polarized Canadian politics from 1879, when it was first implemented, and how and why it was eventually adopted by both the Liberal and Conservative parties, see R.D. Francis, Richard Jones, Donald B. Smith, Journeys: A History of Canada (Toronto: Nelson Education Limited, 2006), pp. 283-284.
uncovering the dialectical interchange between them is therefore crucial to understanding the
history of politics, partisanship, and identity formation in Canada.\textsuperscript{31} Partisan narratives are
fashioned out of ideologies and are stories tailored to character, circumstances, and experience.
They are also relational.\textsuperscript{32} And it is in the telling and selling of competing, nation-building
narratives that partisan identities are fashioned.

In his use of polarizing partisan rhetoric to set out the differences between Tories and
Grits in the postwar period Diefenbaker was not alone. In the immediate postwar decades, the
federal Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties of Canada spent an unprecedented amount
of time delineating their perceived “ideological” differences. As the British definition of English
Canada faded, the two leading political parties were faced with the ontological quandary of re-
fashioning representations of national and partisan identities to fill the void. What emerged were
two competing versions of Canadian history steeped in the partisan language of the 19th century.

As Liberal Party literature explained in 1957, Canadian history began with the settlement
of the New World, when the old-fashioned powers of privilege collided with the reforming
elements of society. The Liberals argued that Tories, by instinct and interest, stood for privilege,
oligarchy, and the retention of Canada’s colonial “British” status. John Stuart Mill, Lord
Durham, George Brown, and Wilfrid Laurier were hailed as the founding fathers of Canadian
Liberalism. Laurier was quoted at length:

\begin{quote}
The principle of Liberalism resides in the essence of our nature itself, in this
thirst for happiness which we bring with us in life, which follows us
everywhere, but which, however, can never quite completely be quenched this
side of heaven. Our soul is immortal but our resources are limited. We gravitate
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{31} On the abandonment—and need to revive—the study of narratives, see Alan Megill, “Recounting the past:
Description, Explanation, and Narrative in Historiography,” \textit{American Historical Review} 94/3 (1989), pp. 627-653;
John E. Toews, “Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: the autonomy of meaning and the irreducibility of
experience,” \textit{American Historical Review} 96 (1991), pp. 879-907; Geoff Eley, “Is all the world a text? From
sociological history to the history of society two decades later,” in Terrence J. McDonald, ed., \textit{The Historic Turn in

\textsuperscript{32} Margaret Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach,” \textit{Theory and
constantly towards an ideal which we never reach. We dream of the best things, we never achieve but the better things. No sooner have we reached the goal we are aiming at, than we discover new horizons, the existence of which we have never even suspected before. We dash towards them and these new horizons, explored in turn, reveal others which sweep us along, on and on, further always. This condition of our nature is precisely what makes the greatness of man; because it condemns him fatally to movement and to progress; our means are limited but our nature is perfectible and the infinite is our track. Thus there is always room for the improvement of our condition, for the further perfecting of our nature and for the accession of the greatest number to a more easy life. This to my eyes constitutes the superiority of Liberalism.33

The Progressive Conservative Party rejected this Whiggish notion that continuous reform created a higher form of society and that the steady and inevitable march of progress was the dominant force in Canadian history. In protest, they wrote their own version of English Canadian history, tracing the story of Canada back to its British, Tory roots. To the Conservatives, the Liberals were agents of American republicanism—reckless reformers and anti-nationalists who, in their fascination with abstract theories of government, sought to undermine British Parliamentary traditions and annex Canada. For them, the function of the Conservative party was to embody the national will and character against ideological threats to British traditions. They hailed Edmund Burke, Benjamin Disraeli, and Sir John A. Macdonald as the fathers of Canadian Conservatism, and used the language of religion, corporatism, the creed of continuity, and the rule of law to illustrate their vision of the good society. Their mantra of “Natural Conservatism” went as follows:

There is a tendency of the human mind to prefer the known and the familiar to the unknown; a tendency to rely on experience rather than on theory, a tendency to respect the institution whose whole value has been proven over the years rather than to supplant it by something new. This tendency is called natural conservatism and is universally recognized. This natural conservatism is the distinguishing characteristic of the Conservative Party. Conservatives have respect for the past, believing that it is better to preserve than to destroy and make anew.34

The proliferation of writing on the philosophies and principles of Liberalism and Conservatism in Canada in the postwar period reveals the extent to which political thinkers and

politicians believed they were in the midst of a period of ideological flux. Liberals and Conservatives not only acknowledged the void, but also sought to fill it by looking beyond institutions and legislatures to revive the forgotten past of partisan struggles, concealed defeats and victories, and casting themselves as the heroes in the true story of Canada. The result was the creation of two starkly different versions of Canadian history that often featured the same cast of characters and chains of events, but which, in the telling, emphasized competing moral and philosophical principles. These rival narratives were employed to differentiate Liberal and Conservative candidates as they battled for political power. They were competing sets of political principles and values that were descriptive of the ways in which Conservative and Liberal thinkers and politicians imagined Canada, its place in the world, their own partisan identities, and the kinds of struggles in which they wished to engage.

The Liberal narrative of the 1950s took its cue, at least in part, from debates going on in the United States over what it meant to be a “liberal.” Books published on the topic of American political culture in the United States inspired two different schools of thought. There were some left-wing critics who viewed the United States as a liberal society which increasingly suffered from corruption in business, labour, and law enforcement practices; from a growing concentration of business power; from the influences of mass culture run by entertainment tycoons who satisfied the lowest common denominator in popular taste; and from a wasteful expenditure of resources directed to enhance social status. According to the second view, America was a prosperous, highly democratic society rooted in the liberal tradition; in which the distribution of income, status symbols, and of opportunities for social mobility were increasingly

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egalitarian; in which tolerance for cultural, religious and ethnic diversity was growing; and in which demand for the best in art, literature, and music was evident.\textsuperscript{36}

Whichever of these interpretations of American political, economic, and social life the reader was inclined to follow at the time, they shared the same underlying assumption: that the United States, and North America by extension, was a liberal society. If Canada was mentioned at all in these books, it was either as a foil to highlight the more radical elements of American liberalism or portrayed as being its slightly distorted mirror image. For all intents and purposes, Canada was believed to be at best the beneficiary of or, at worst, subject to the transformative, modernizing power of the American liberalism.\textsuperscript{37}

Since Tocqueville, scholars have viewed America as an exceptional and paradigmatic “liberal democratic” society, shaped by the comparatively free and equal conditions and the Enlightenment ideals said to have prevailed at its founding. The impact of Tocqueville’s thesis on modern American scholarship was magnified in the 1950s, most famously by the political scientist, Louis Hartz, who attributed the conspicuous absence of ideologies in the United States to an enduring Lockean liberal consensus which shaped and narrowed the landscape of possibilities for political thought and behaviour.\textsuperscript{38} Hartz’s “fragment theory” is an elaboration on the new societies founded by European colonists. To him, the new societies began as fragments of particular parts of European civilization, the development of each being affected by what it


\textsuperscript{37} For example, see David Morris Potter, \textit{People of Plenty}, 14; Louis Hartz, \textit{The Founding of New Societies}, pp. 219-74.

\textsuperscript{38} Tocqueville’s nineteenth-century classic, \textit{Democracy in America}, experienced somewhat of a revival in the United States after the Second World War among liberals and conservatives alike. In particular, Tocqueville’s warnings about the dangers of mass society were used by critics of mass culture on the right and on the left. See C.W. E. Bigsby, \textit{The Cambridge Companion to American Culture} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 59-60.
left behind as well as what it met in the new world. The British colonies of North America are what Hartz calls “bourgeois fragments” thrown off from the British motherland, liberal from their inception.\(^39\) Frozen at the point of origin, liberalism became the underlying ideology and cultural myth of American political life, and would remain unchanged in the face of waves of immigration, depressions, wars, and revolutions, both within and outside the nation’s borders.\(^40\) Seen in this way, liberalism was a North American state of mind, universal to the extent that it existed “beneath the surface of thought to the level of an assumption.”\(^41\)

In the midst of the prosperity of the immediate postwar decades, few scholars quibbled with Hartz’s Tocquevillian interpretation of America’s relatively egalitarian and free economic and social conditions. Some, however, took issue with the view that liberalism emerged in America as if from a vacuum, severed from its links with any specific ideological heritage. Among them was Robert Kelley, a historian whose work brought into view the features of a liberal-democratic Anglo-American-Canadian community which he believed emerged and cohered in the age of William Ewart Gladstone. Kelley’s work added an intellectual dimension to the historic economic triangle of buying and selling, investing and dividend-paying, migration, and production into which Great Britain, the United States, and Canada poured their efforts during the expansive nineteenth and early twentieth century.\(^42\) To him, the Liberals in Britain and Canada and the Democrats in the United States were, “local manifestations of a larger political

\(^{39}\) Louis Hartz, The Founding of New Societies, 304.

\(^{40}\) For a pointed criticism of Hartz that addresses each of these themes, see Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz,” The American Political Science Review, Vol. 87, No. 3 (Sept., 1993), pp. 549-566.

\(^{41}\) Hartz, “The Fragmentation of European Culture and Ideology,” 5.

\(^{42}\) Kelley took up the call of scholars like J.B. Brebner and Frank Thistlethwaite, who, after the Second World War, sought to underline the shared historic economic, political, and cultural heritage of Britain, the United States, and Canada. Brebner dubbed the United States and Canada as “the Siamese Twins of North America who cannot separate and live,” The North Atlantic Triangle: the Interplay of Canada, the United States, and Great Britain (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), xxi. See also, Frank Thistlethwaite, America and the Atlantic Community: Anglo-American Aspects, 1790-1850 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).
persuasion that extended throughout the Anglo-American community." Beyond a common heritage and special relationships they shared, Kelley believed that Canada, the United States, and Britain constituted “a continuing community with a common life and therefore common history.”

While Hartz portrayed North Americans as instinctive Lockeans with no real awareness of any ideological alternatives, Kelley maintained that the Liberal-Democratic mind on both sides of the Atlantic was forged in the heat of political battle against its ideological nemesis—Conservatism. “World views in politics,” he argued, “are not only associated with the arts and gesture and political symbolism, they are themselves inherently dramatic images of conflict and possibility.” Identifying and depicting the Tory enemy and rendering him in detestable and threatening forms was thus essential to the formation of the Liberal-Democratic philosophy. As Kelley explained:

Who is the Tory? What is the Republican really like? Although such matters may sometimes have the appearance of a charade, I am convinced that the image of the enemy is the most serious and revealing element in a political persuasion, providing us with the best means for linking widely separated political movements... By and large, Liberal-Democrats marched to the same drummer; they looked out upon society and saw the same drama. They were consequently stimulated by a common assessment of the order of battle.

For Kelley, the Liberals and Conservatives viewed politics as a battle between two competing partisan narratives and two opposing world views. Kelley traced the war of ideas back through history to the 18th century, when great “Liberal prophets” such as Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, and, on the American side, Thomas Jefferson, fought the powers of privilege on the part of the common man. The Liberal was at once described as a reformer who opposed imperial

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44 Ibid., xix.
45 Ibid., xix.
46 While scholars often portray Burke as a conservative through and through, Kelley suggests that 19th century Liberals like William Gladstone claimed him for their own. To Kelley, the image of Burke in the Gladstonian Liberal mind was one of reform, pragmatism, freedom, liberty, and self-government. Ibid., 99-100.
entanglements, a fighter of self-seeking aristocracies and religious zealots, a proponent of liberty and equality, individualism and pluralism, free trade and cosmopolitan internationalism.\textsuperscript{47} The Conservative was portrayed, both by Kelley and the Liberal subjects of his study, as a status-seeking bully, imperialist, monarchist, protectionist, and aristocratic patriarch.\textsuperscript{48} In Canada, Kelley argued, to be Conservative was to be British and a supporter of imperial federation. To be Liberal was to believe in a unique and distinct Canadian nationality, one separate from Great Britain and inclusive of Quebec in a multi-ethnic community.\textsuperscript{49}

In Kelley’s eyes, the Liberal-Democratic mind was ill equipped to deal with the complex social, economic, and political changes wrought by the First World War, the Depression, and the rise of the Keynesian welfare state. Yet it is undeniable that the Liberal narrative of reform, liberty, equality, unity and internationalism persisted until the late 1960s. Indeed, scholars like Kelley and Hartz were its most prolific advocates. While the two American scholars differed in their conception of liberalism and Liberal Democracy both in theory and in practice, they made important contributions to a widespread debate going on about liberalism in the 1950s and 1960s, both with regards to its ideological roots and its function in North American society. The intellectual debate made an indelible impact on political relationships on both sides of the border, as politicians attempted to grapple with the changing geopolitical circumstances of the postwar period and the advent of mass culture and mass consumption.

On the Canadian side, the idea that the nation was a northern extension of the American liberal society and subject to the same sorts of technological and political changes experienced by its neighbours to the south was not exactly novel. Nor was the notion that it was part of a wider, transatlantic community of liberals and Liberal partisans. Since the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Liberal

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., pp. 416-417.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 382.
political thinkers and politicians had been referring to Canada as a liberal, North American society. Goldwin Smith, a British political thinker and historian of some renown, had experienced life in all three corners of the North Atlantic Triangle and was adamant, upon settling down in Canada in 1871, that the country was a political, economic, and geographic absurdity. Smith was a 19th century liberal of the Manchester school: he shunned aristocracy and privilege, sought to destroy the connection between church and state, was a free trader and deplored pride in empire.50

During the federal election of 1891, as Tories and Grits fought it out over Laurier’s platform of unrestricted reciprocity, Smith weighed in with *Canada and the Canadian Question*—a polemic written in support of the cause of commercial and eventual political union with the United States. In the book, Smith criticised the Conservative Party for calculatedly pushing its imperial agenda in order to rationalize the policy of protectionism and protect the investments of partisan supporters in the Canadian manufacturing industry.51 He argued that Canada, separated by geographical barriers running north and south into four regions, each having free communication with the adjoining parts of the United States, was an artificial nation that was destined by its natural configuration to enter into political and commercial union with the United States.52 To Smith, Canada was already being assimilated to the social and cultural life of the United States. In his eyes, the newly confederated nation should accept its ultimate fate and acquiesce to an amiable incorporation into the American Republic.

Smith’s treatise on the economic and political annexation of Canada to the United States had been written at a time of extreme crisis and self-doubt in Canadian national life. Economic depression and threats of federal disintegration hung over the nation, casting a pall over the

51 Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 166.
52 Ibid., 153.
feelings of optimism that greeted its creation in 1867. All that changed at the turn of the twentieth century, when prosperity, economic, and demographic expansion sealed Canada’s future as a nation separate from that of the United States. People began to wonder whether Canada had finally bridged the gulf between a stagnant colonial status and a progressive nationhood during the days of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

Among them was his biographer, the economic historian Oscar Douglas Skelton. Skelton has been called “the father of the Liberal narrative,” and for good reason. A liberal democrat and nationalist who believed that Canada must take control of its own affairs, he worked for the Liberal party as early as the election of 1911 and was close to Laurier in his last years. Mackenzie King engaged him as a deputy minister for external affairs in 1925 and he held that position to his death, serving King and the Conservative Prime Minister, R.B. Bennett.

Skelton’s contribution to the Liberal narrative was made before his public service, however, while he was John A. Macdonald Professor of Political Science and Economics at Queen’s University. He was taught the “North American creed” by Adam Shortt, a political economist and nationalist for whom “the continent was a crucial fact of Canadian economic life.” Skelton went further than his mentor, however, in decrying Canada’s emotional ties to Britain; the renunciation of Conservative readiness to participate in a common imperial foreign policy is a theme that runs consistently throughout his writing. Although Skelton revered the legacy of orderly freedom and responsible government bequeathed to Canada by the mother country, he drew a definitive line between Britain’s imperialism, European militarism, and the

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55 During his career as a civil servant, Skelton was staunchly non-partisan. He praised Laurier and Borden for their pursuit of policies based on Canada’s distinctive interest and for avoiding the extremes of imperialism and anti-Americanism. See Ferguson, *Remaking Liberalism*, 85. He also worked loyally for Bennett. See Larry Glassford, *Reaction and Reform*, pp. 101-102.
North American penchant for cooperation, openness, and peace. But his North Americanism did not make him a supporter of annexation. Rather he idealized the cause of national sovereignty and independence embodied in the pragmatic policies of Laurier and the Liberal party. The Liberals, he argued in his biography of Laurier (1921), naturally accepted Canada’s separate, North American identity. They “found their models and inspiration... in the men who fought the battles of orderly freedom and responsible government” and against what they deemed to be elements of Tory “privilege and self interest.” “On individual freedom alone,” Skelton believed, “could a sound national political system be built up,” just as “on colonial freedom alone had it been possible to build up the imperial system.”

Skelton’s narrative of autonomy became a constant in the writings of Liberal intellectuals during the interwar years and into the postwar period. In particular, his themes attracted the young historian, Frank H. Underhill. Ironically, Underhill could have served as a prototype of the imperial Canadian. He was educated at the University of Toronto, a graduate of Oxford University, and had been an officer in the First World War. Yet Underhill rejected the notion that Canada was a Conservative nation whose European heritage was a key element in its identity. During the First World War he had witnessed the folly of European militarism first hand. Upon resuming his career as a Canadian historian at the University of Saskatchewan, Underhill touted the North American aspect of the Canadian identity and set out to trace the historical origins of the so called “Liberal tradition” in Canada in order to reconnect the Liberal party to the principles that gave it birth.

Underhill viewed Canada through the triangular lens of Anglo-American-Canadian relations. Before the Second World War, he claimed that Canada’s survival as a sovereign nation

depended on its ability to balance itself “in a triangle of forces in which Britain was at one corner and the United States at the other.” From Lord Durham’s Report in 1839 to the outbreak of war in 1939, Canada evolved from a British colony to an independent North American nation because it successfully positioned itself at the lesser point of an “isosceles triangle,” with “both Britain and the United States pulling roughly the same weight.”\textsuperscript{60} By the 1950s, however, he saw the balance of power definitively shift from London to Washington. And much like his fellow Liberals, in Underhill’s eyes this was not necessarily a bad thing; the end of the British century of Canadian history and the dawning of the North American century might inspire widespread national neuroses, but it could also provoke the kind of change which would force Canada to chart its own geopolitical trajectory.

The narrative of autonomy as articulated by political thinkers like Smith, Skelton, and Underhill can also be found in the campaign literature of the National Liberal Federation of Canada that was published after the Second World War. References to the transatlantic liberal persuasion, North Americanism, and spirit of reform are constant—but it was the historic political battles fought against Conservatism in the name of liberty, equality, pluralism and liberal internationalism which drove the plot along. The first postwar statement of Liberal philosophy and principles can be found in the preamble to the Resolutions adopted by the third National Liberal Convention held in Ottawa in August, 1948. It was later elaborated in a much longer, more detailed campaign document entitled, \textit{Liberalism and the Evolution of Freedom in Canada} and in a shorter, abridged version that was distributed widely during the federal election of 1957, entitled \textit{Liberalism, A Fighting Faith}.\textsuperscript{61} The literature was published as a tribute to the evolution of Liberalism from its beginnings in the British tradition of reform to its later

\textsuperscript{60} Underhill, \textit{In Search of Canadian Liberalism}, 256.

manifestation as the underlying philosophy of Canada’s one true national party. It was designed to revive the public memory of struggles for responsible government and progressive reform brought to Canadians by the Liberal Party. It took as its field of reference the never-ending movement Canadian history and the perpetual progressive struggle of Liberalism against the obstructionist forces of Conservatism.

As the Liberal story goes, the conflict between the Liberal and Conservative world views began before Confederation in the settlements of New France and British North America. “The Tories,” it was argued, “by instinct and interest stood for dependency and subjection of the new settlements to the Mother country and they were content to be called subjects.” In contrast, “the political and spiritual ancestors of the modern Liberal party, from the outset, contended that free-born Englishmen did not lose any of their rights by crossing the Atlantic and that the settlements should be governed for the benefit of the settlers.”

The struggle of seven men to secure responsible government for Canada anchored the Liberal narrative of progress and reform: the leaders of the Lower and Upper Canadian Rebellions of 1837, Louis Joseph Papineau, and William Lyon Mackenzie; the British Whig statesman, John Lambton, 1st Earl of Durham, also known as “Radical Jack”—the author of the famous Report on the Affairs of British North America (1839); the moderate reformers, Robert Baldwin of Upper Canada and Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine of Lower Canada, who worked together to form the first responsible ministry in British North America (1848-1851); and, finally, the two fathers of Confederation, Joseph Howe and George Brown, “who won, for the people of Canada—Protestant and Catholic alike—that great measure of justice embodied in the Act of 1867.”

Hailed as Canadian heroes, rebels, nation-builders, and friends of the common man, it was the Liberal reformer who challenged the powers of privilege in the name of liberty,

63 George Brown on Confederation, quoted in Liberalism and the Evolution of Freedom in Canada, 34.
equality, and responsible government.64 “Free men since the days of Magna Carta (1215)” had “opposed despotism and asserted their rights.” Years later, “Lord John Russell and Lord Durham drafted the First Reform Bill (1831) as members of Earl Grey’s Whig Government.” Only after “the King persuaded the die-hard Tories to absent themselves from the House of Lords when the final vote was taken was civil war averted and the Bill passed.”65 The reforming spirit of the British Whigs was thus inherited by the Liberal Party of Canada. As the Liberal leader Louis St. Laurent was quoted saying to an audience of New Yorkers in 1951:

> The political freedom you achieved by the sudden stroke of revolution, we achieved more slowly and more gradually by evolution. Without breaking our tie with the British Crown, we transformed a disunited group of small colonies into a single nation, stretching, like yours, from sea to sea, and just as free as the United States.66

After the Second World War, the Liberal narrative was modified in order to tell and sell Mackenzie King’s plans to implement a new system of social security. Rather than admit to incorporating elements of socialism into the Liberal party programme, however, the change is portrayed in party literature, books, and essays written by sympathetic observers as merely an example of the Liberal propensity to reform. King was lionized by the Liberal Party as one of its greatest heroes. Like Laurier before him, his speeches were quoted at length because they were said to embody the reforming tendency of Liberalism in Canada:

> Liberalism is the continuous releasing of or unlocking of a great onward force—an energizing force, a vital force, a force that is forever serving mankind, and it is a force that is ever seeking and finding a wider outlet. It may begin in a remote place, it may narrow at its source, but like our great rivers, it keeps on widening and widening, taking in, and adding to itself as it travels along, more and more of the strength and vitality that comes from experience of the years. The experience of past years is continually making its contribution; and the farther we are able to trace the stream back to its source, the ampler will be the experience which greets us in the present.67

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“Thus it happened,” according to the Liberal narrative, “that the grandson of the old rebel, William Lyon Mackenzie, was given the opportunity to bring about great reforms himself.” And so, with a small green booklet outlining his plans for postwar reconstruction in hand, King shrewdly “refurbished” the Liberal program in order to undercut the growing popularity of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and leave the newly named Progressive Conservative party with little timber with which to build a platform of reform.68

The Liberal-leaning press responded in kind, lauding King as an “incredible Canadian” who managed to bridge the gap between old school, laissez-faire Liberalism and new, progressive social policies.69 Bruce Hutchison chronicled King’s path towards enlightenment in glowing terms, as if Gabriel had descended from Heaven to visit the politician and personally deliver the news. While “the young King,” Hutchison explained, “had been an orthodox Liberal like Laurier, who actually was a kind of illogical Canadian Whig, an expatriate Walpole,” the more experienced King was open to the progressivism of his times. He embraced the brave new Keynesian world, turning “the historical doctrine of Liberalism upside down, as it stands today.” “Instead of supporting Adam Smith’s imaginary free market as the norm of human behaviour,” King heroically “denounced it as abnormal,” arguing that “the market’s brutal Law of Competing Standards was the weapon of the rich, the oppressor of the poor.”70 Whenever the need for reform was felt across the country, Hutchison made it known that the Liberal Party was the only


69 Hutchison’s colleague and fellow Liberal apologist, Blair Fraser, quoted Toynbee in reference to the party’s tendency to reform: “That without exception, civilizations were conceived in adversity, and not, as the Marxists argue, in ease and plenty. Genesis and growth are the rhythm of challenge and response.” See *Blair Fraser Reports, Selections, 1944-1968*, John and Graham Fraser, eds., (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969), xxi.

means by which to assure the individual a greater measure of freedom and better opportunities to share the bounty of the new nation.

Bruce Hutchison’s story resembled others of the Liberal tradition in that it was based on a history of reform and the fight for liberty, equality, and democracy against forces of Conservatism, aristocratic privilege, and colonial subservience. The Liberal narrative of Canada, which spoke of progress, reform, and the final triumph of a Liberal world view and way of life, was used as a weapon against its political rivals. The story is riddled with contradictions. Some political thinkers and politicians emphasized Canada’s North American state of mind and considered it a slightly more Conservative fragment of American liberal society; others considered Canadians as being the beneficiaries of the British tradition of Liberal reform; still others formulated stories that combined both of these ideas, trumpeting Canada’s special relationship with the United States and Britain while celebrating its independence as a sovereign, North American nation. The Liberal narrative might have varied depending on the teller, but it was always a hybrid of ideas, shaped by the storyteller’s identity, ideas about the nation, its history, and its place in the world. It was a partisan discourse that told of a perpetual relationship of struggles and political battles with the Conservative other. It is in this way that the Liberal tradition in Canada was a major talking point in the postwar period. We must take Kelley’s advice and look to the Conservative enemy to figure out why.

Like so many other lost causes, for much of the twentieth century Conservatism in Canada came to be known to posterity largely through the writings of its enemies. Since the death of the old leader, Sir John A. Macdonald, the Conservative Party was plagued with problems of internal disunity, disorganization, and failed leadership, symptoms later diagnosed by the political scientist George C. Perlin as the “Tory Syndrome.”

Decades of infighting

proved harmful to the party, raising doubts among the electorate about its ability to govern and
its competence as a party of opposition, in addition to repelling a generation of young
intellectuals, politicians, and technocrats who turned to the Liberals as the only vehicle for career
advancement. The weakness of the Conservative position made it difficult to attract budding
political thinkers and politicians to the party’s cause.

More often than not, the fine points of Conservative thought in Canada could be gleaned
in the writings of Liberal-leaning journalists and thinkers like Goldwin Smith, O.D. Skelton,
A.R.M. Lower, Frank H. Underhill, Grant Dexter, Bruce Hutchison, and Blair Fraser or, on the
off chance, by glancing at the literature published by the National Liberal Federation of Canada.
The critics wrote much and they wrote persuasively, and though they rejected Conservatism for
varied and sometimes conflicting reasons, they tended to indentify it with the two characteristics
which dominated subsequent discussions of it. The first was that the motive force behind
Conservatism, if it was recognized as an ideological “other” at all, was the preservation of
privilege and reluctance to embrace progressive reform. The second was that its objectives and
the entire cast of thought on which it rested were completely antithetical to Canadian
nationalism. Viewed in this way, Conservatism ran against the rising tide of Canadian national
feeling, a reactionary remnant of the colonial past vainly struggling to prevent the inevitable
triumph of a more progressive Canadian nationalism. It was a winning strategy. For almost
twenty-two years the Liberal Party governed Canada, becoming firmly ensconced in the
everyday functioning of the burgeoning welfare state. At the same time, the Liberals
successfully peddled their story of Canada to the public in an effort to convince voters that

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theirs’ was the only party of Canadian autonomy, the only party of reform, the only one that truly embodied the national will and character.

There were political thinkers in the immediate postwar decades, however, who sought to rescue Canadian history from the mystical, Lockean world of Louis Hartz. To them, the question was not whether Conservatism in Canada existed as a viable political alternative, but whether or not it could capture the public imagination and remove the Liberal narrative from its entrenched position in mainstream English Canadian political discourse. As the Conservative-leaning historian, W.R. Graham, explained in an article published in 1956 called “Can the Conservatives Come Back?” the key to political longevity for the Liberal party was its ability to make its own mythology a Canadian universal. According to the myth, the Liberals had always “devoted themselves to desirable causes like national unity, the achievement of complete autonomy for Canada, freer trade, social welfare, and reform.” In contrast, the Conservatives “stood for Anglo-Saxon dominance and racial bigotry, colonialism, high tariffs, and free enterprise.” The article ends with the suggestion that the Conservative party make known its progressive stance on the important issues of the day, but, more importantly, that it communicate to the public “the position it actually has occupied historically.”

What Graham invited the Conservatives to do was to reopen the public memory, to become aware of and to recuperate both expertise and knowledge about Conservatism, about the Conservative Party, and about Canadian history. He suggested that the Conservatives would not regain power if they did not reclaim the history of which they had been dispossessed, or which, rather, they never tried to possess. Gaining a new self awareness and tracing the sources of knowledge and memory meant denouncing all mystifications of history created on the part of the Liberal enemy. In Graham’s eyes, only by re-establishing themselves as a subject of history and

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reinserting their narrative into the web of knowledge could the Conservatives regain the status of a national party. The key to winning the political battle was thus to use the Conservative Party as a mechanism with which to trace the connecting thread that, behind the public battles waged in federal elections, uncovered a different version of national history, and beyond that, a specifically Tory world view through which Canadians could understand themselves, the nation, and its role in the wider world.

Graham suggested that the Conservatives make a real attempt to render the relationship of political battle with Liberalism as part of a permanent war with the Liberal world view and vision of the nation. But by 1956 the war was already well underway. Indeed in the mid-1950s, Progressive Conservative Members of Parliament, Conservative-leaning academics, and even some long-time Liberal partisans were becoming increasingly concerned with the state of the party, and the two-party system in Canada. They were also worried about whether Canada was becoming “Americanized” and apprehensive about the extent to which the nation’s links to the British Empire were consciously being eroded. Conservative politicians and intellectuals began to correspond with one another about the necessity of reinterpreting Canadian political history in order to correct the “false mythology” produced by the Liberals and provide a clearer understanding on the part of Conservatives of the basic principles of the Party.

Some among them sensed a turn in the tide of public opinion away from the Liberals and towards the Conservative Party. Two Progressive Conservative MPs, E. Davie Fulton and

75 For more on the sterile state of the postwar political milieu, see Dalton Camp, *Gentlemen, Players and Politicians* (Toronto: Denau and Greenberg, 1970); William Christian, *George Grant: A Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 94-99; Charles Gavan “Chubby” power looked on with angst at what he viewed as an ideologically void Liberal party, see *Chubby Power: A Party Politician*, Norman Ward, ed. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966). In the mid 1950s, the influential Liberal Senator, T.A. Crerar, wrote to his friend and longtime Liberal journalist, Grant Dexter, complaining that “the real trouble with the [Liberal] Government has been their complacency in the past, arising from the sense of security they enjoy, because of the poverty of the opposition.” It was this sense of security that was partially responsible for the results of the federal election of 1957. See Senator T.A. Crerar to Grant Dexter, 13 December 1955: Queen’s University Archives, Grant Dexter Papers; Collection 2142; Box 7; Folder 45.

76 See the letter written to Canadian historian Donald Creighton from the Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament from Kamloops, B.C., E. Davie Fulton, on 23 January 1956: LAC MG 32 B-11 Vol. 6.
Gordon Churchill, began to correspond with academics like Hugh Thorburn and Donald Creighton about “interesting academic minds in the situation” and “finding a way to apply intelligently the tools now at hand, of a changed public opinion, and increased perpectivity of the people towards us and towards George Drew,” the PC Party leader of the early 1950s. The goal was thus to reinsert the Conservative idea into the story of Canada, and to establish once again the Conservative Party as the key mover of Canadian history. The proliferation of writing on the subject of Conservatism in the 1950s suggests that far from being a consensus viewpoint in Canada, Liberalism was a highly contentious program.

The Conservative political thinkers and politicians of the postwar decades did not have to invent a new story of Canada. The roots of Conservative-nationalist sentiment can be traced back to ideas about Canadian imperialism that emerged in the late nineteenth century. As Carl Berger has shown, early Canadian imperialists called for closer union of the British Empire through economic and military cooperation and political changes which would give the dominions influence over imperial policy. His groundbreaking work took the important step of illustrating how the imperial federation movement was founded on an admiration for the British constitution, respect for tradition and precedent, and an enduring criticism of Liberalism that was tied up in a particular understanding of American social and political practices. Berger’s contention that the imperial idea in Canada came out of a distinctively home-grown variety of Conservative nationalism challenged the Liberal historiography which had for so long claimed nationalist sentiment for itself. Yet the same flaw that liberal historian Robert Kelley might have identified in the work of Louis Hartz applies to Berger’s rather limited characterization of


Conservative nationalism in Canada. Conservatism in Canada was much more than a home-spun nationalist project. Its language and history were derived in Britain and forged in the heat of the battle against the Liberal world view.

When the movement for imperial federation first proclaimed its gospel in Canada, genuine fears that the motherland had failed to tend to the imperial estate were growing on both sides of the Atlantic. In Britain, ideas that the empire was already over-extended were beginning to hold sway. However, by the early 1870s the battle for mastery in Europe and the consequent scramble for colonial possessions tipped the balance of popular opinion in favour of imperialism. The Conservative leader, Benjamin Disraeli, called the empire an essential pillar supporting Great Britain’s status as a great power. He attributed England’s greatness to the traditional values of religion, property, and natural aristocracy and declared himself as being on the “nationalist” side in the battle between “national” and “cosmopolitan” approaches to government. Disraeli believed that the 18th century Whigs had run an anti-national system of Venetian politics, Dutch finance, and French wars. Their 19th century successors had made known their penchant for abstractions by allying with a host of undesirable ideologues: utilitarians, Irish Repealers, opponents to the Church establishment, and laissez-faire Cobdenite zealots. For Disraeli, the political game was romanticized into a great conflict of ideas. In this way, the partisan political struggle was glorified into a war for the soul of England.

The confrontation between Liberalism and Conservatism which played such a vital role in 19th century British politics left a massive imprint on political culture in Canada, particularly with regards to the debate over imperial federation. The imperial idea brought about a synthesis of English Conservative thought with a set of specifically Canadian conditions. Born in Nova

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Scotia and educated in Scotland at the University of Glasgow, George Monro Grant was a Presbyterian minister, the principal of Queen’s College in Kingston, Ontario, and one of Canada’s most prolific imperialists. After the publication of Goldwin Smith’s *Canada and the Canadian Question* in 1891, Grant moved swiftly to rebuke the Victorian Liberal’s secessionist impulses. His essential objection to Smith was based on a Conservative conception of nationality which viewed Canada within the framework of the British Empire. Grant’s vision was of a great Anglo-Saxon Commonwealth which boasted a common sovereign, flag and language that would become a force for civilization in the world. Implicit in his glorification of the empire was a sharp critique of American social, economic, and political life coupled with the more sinister argument that the Dominion must help to shoulder the “White Man’s Burden.” Rather than choosing to reap the material benefits of commercial and political union with the United States, Grant believed that Canadians would “choose to be citizens of the world” and thereby actively and responsibly “take part in an Empire that is of world-wide significance.”

Underlying Grant’s imperialism was a deep and abiding loyalty to the motherland. His mystical account of the forging of Canada was a nation-building story complete with its own “standing army of engineers, axmen and brawny labourers” which would conquer western frontiers to make way for Anglo-Saxon civilization. While Liberals called for abstract, revolutionary reform that had no historical precedents, Grant believed that nations were slow-growing, organic entities: “The nation” he said, “cannot be pulled up by its roots, cannot be dissociated from its past, without danger to its highest interests.” Like Disraeli, for Grant making historical connections was crucial. In his eyes, “more valuable than even the direct advantages of the imperial connection were the subtle, indirect influences that flow from our

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82 George Monro Grant, *A Case for Canada*, Published by the Imperial Federation League of Canada, 13 September 1889.
83 George Monro Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sanford Fleming’s Expedition through Canada in 1872* (Toronto: James Campbell and Sons, 1873), 358.
living in unbroken connection with the old land, and the dynamical if imponderable forces that
determine the tone and mould the character of a people.” “In our halls” Grant said, “is hung
armoury of the invincible knights of old. Ours’ are the old histories, the misty paths, the graves
of our forefathers. Ours’ the names to which a thousand memories call. Ours’ is the flag; Ours’
the Queen whose virtues transmute the sacred principle of loyalty into a personal affection.”84

The goal of imperial unity was not shared by everyone who counted themselves as
members of the Conservative community at the turn-of-the century. In November 1875, the
Conservative Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, argued resolutely at a meeting in Montreal
that the British dominions could never be effectively represented by an imperial parliament or by
the establishment of a federal legislature for the entire Empire.85 But Macdonald was still an
imperialist and his Conservative narrative was very much in tune with the Tory narrative being
aired on both sides of the Atlantic. The rivalry of Disraeli and Gladstone was echoed in that of
Macdonald and Laurier, as they fought to build the Dominion in accordance with their
competing world views.86 The election of 1891, which pitted Laurier’s Liberal policy of
unrestricted reciprocity with the United States against Macdonald’s conservative National Policy
of protectionism and western expansion, was construed from the beginning as a battle over
Canada’s soul. Macdonald argued that Laurier’s adoption of a policy of unrestricted reciprocity
with the United States was a conscious attempt to tamper with English Canada’s British identity.
He denounced the Liberal bid for free trade as anti-nationalist and pro-American, describing it as
the first step towards economic and political annexation and the breaking of the British
connection. He cleverly fought and won the election with an emotional appeal to “The Old Flag,
The Old Policy, The Old Leader.” The slogan encapsulated the three key Tory tools of federal

84 Ibid., 368.
86 Macdonald’s partner, the French Canadian Georges Etienne Cartier, criticized British Liberals as being “full of
American ideas and sympathies.” Creighton, The Old Chieftain, 28.
election victory that remained relevant until well into the postwar decades: strong leadership, a “national” policy, and the regional and racial appeal encoded in the British flag.  

Macdonald’s ideas about Canada and his public image make sense only when viewed as part of a transatlantic “Conservative political world.” He knew numerous British Tories, and broke bread with the likes of Disraeli and the Colonial Secretary, Sir Michael Hicks Beach when he travelled to London. When the Macdonald arrived in Whitehall in search of British financial aid for the Canadian Pacific Railways, the Canadian Governor General, Lord Lorne, wrote ahead to Disraeli proclaiming that Macdonald was “perhaps the last Canadian statesman who entirely looks to England, and who may be believed to be devoted to the imperial interests…” Like Disraeli, Macdonald believed the function of the Conservative Party was to embody the national will and character against the real and perceived threats to its survival. He held that Conservatism and its historic traditions transcended class and regional division for the good of the nation. And he believed in unity with the British Empire to the extent that it was the only means by which to offset the power of the United States in North America. There was thus much more to Macdonald’s famous declaration, “I am a British subject and British born, and a British subject I hope to die,” than the pragmatic hope of attracting English Canadian jingoes. Throughout his political career he made a conscious effort to appeal to a Conservative audience which shared his prejudices and ideals about themselves and about the nation.

The story of Sir John A. Macdonald, the nation-builder and godfather of the Conservative movement in Canada, has been an integral part of Conservative narrative ever since. However, it

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89 Creighton, *The Old Chieftain*, 267.
was not until the early-mid 1950s that the “true story” of Macdonald and his status as Canada’s preeminent statesman was revived. Between 1952 and 1956, the Canadian historian, Donald Creighton, published a two-volume tome on the life and legacy of Canada’s first Prime Minister. Nearly twenty years of Liberal governance had made Creighton conscious of the need to expose and replace the Grit narrative of Canadian history by opening up the English Canadian public memory and recuperating pieces of the forgotten Tory past. He wrote *John A. Macdonald* in order to expose Liberal mystifications of the Canadian experience and insert in their place a Conservative narrative of national development. Like W. R. Graham, he believed that the Liberal narrative of Canada been perfected by a “generation of publicists, journalists, and professors—the Canadian nationalists of the 1930s—who arose to extol the sufficiency and normality of North Americanism.”

Stories about Canada’s delivery from its colonial status, Creighton lamented, always began with tales about “great Liberal reformers” like Robert Baldwin, Edward Blake, and Wilfrid Laurier—three nation builders “whose generalized features bore a remarkable resemblance to the sober, earnest, volubly virtuous…. William Ewart Gladstone.” They always ended with the great works of William Lyon Mackenzie King, the man who single-handedly “affected his people’s final deliverance through the Statute of Westminster.”

There would be no gradual evolution from colony to nation in Creighton’s story of Canada, however: only the nightmarish scenario of a far more sinister form of colonial servitude under the thumb of the American empire. After Mackenzie King sold the nation’s soul to the American devil during and after the Second World War, Creighton believed that it was only a matter of time before Canadians uncritically imbibed “a North American view of the world, mass

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produced in the United States.” He believed that, due to the unrestricted infiltration of American culture, Canadians would passively buy into the assertion that the Cold War was “a struggle between free enterprise and communism, between Christianity and irreligious determinism… between two conflicting ‘ways of life.’” To Creighton, the British tradition and the influence of the Commonwealth were the only antidotes to American power and an over simplistic and illusory vision of the postwar world. He envisioned a globe with a “multiple balance of power” in which multinational institutions like the Commonwealth and the UN would offset the power of the American and Soviet empires. “It was Great Britain,” he urged, that “set India free and established democracies in Asia.” And it was “the subsequent agreement of 1949, which permitted these new Asian nations… to retain their historical affiliation,” that revealed the Commonwealth once again as the greatest living example of the free association of peoples.”

Creighton played a crucial role in the re-fashioning of the old Conservative narrative to meet the changing times. Like the cultural critics to the south, he viewed the transformative power of liberalism as a threat to the English Canadian identity as well as the country’s economic and political independence. He not only criticized the Liberal status quo, but offered up an alternative—one that combined home-grown Conservative nationalism with a transatlantic Tory narrative. In this he was joined by contemporary cultural critics whose partisan loyalties reached across the English Canadian political spectrum and who were making their voices heard.

Historians seeking to understand the Canadian cultural “elite” of the postwar period have tended to cite the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts Letters, and Sciences (1949-1951) as a watershed moment in the development of a national cultural infrastructure that

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96 Donald Creighton, “Canada in the World”: LAC MG 21/D77/Vol. 11.
97 Massolin finds an interesting link between Canadian “tory” intellectuals and political thinkers in the United States like Walter Lippmann with regards to their criticism of mass culture and mass consumption. See Philip Massolin, Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity, 1939-1970 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 42-44.
would be unique in North America.\footnote{For more on the pivotal role of the Massey Commission in inspiring the “quest” for a national culture, see Paul Litt, \textit{The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Ryan Edwardson, \textit{Canadian Content: The Quest for Nationhood} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), especially Ch. 2, pp. 51-77.} While recognizing the importance of the Massey Commission as a budding nationalist movement, Leonard Kuffert finds diffuse groupings of cultural critics complaining about the onslaught of modernity and the perils of American imperialism everywhere in postwar Canada.\footnote{Leonard Kuffert, \textit{A Great Duty: Canadian Responses to Modern Life and Mass Culture, 1939-1967} (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), pp. 11-12.} His cultural critics include academics, advisors, bureaucrats, professionals, public intellectuals, and commentators who took it upon themselves to empower the Canadian public by helping citizens to find their place and cope with the challenges they faced in the modern, postwar world. Philip Massolin picks up where Kuffert leaves off by adding an historical and ideological dimension to anti-modernism in postwar Canada. The cultural critics included in his study, from Vincent Massey and George Grant to Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan, are portrayed as being part of a much older “tory tradition,” bound together not so much by partisan affiliations as by the ideas they shared about the organic nature of the dominion, the slow evolutionary process of institutional and legislative reform, and the corporatist view of society.\footnote{Massolin, \textit{Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity, 1939-1970}, 6.}

While Kuffert and Massolin’s anti-modernists might have shared similar anxieties about the state of Canada’s moral, cultural, and political life, both historians ignore the ways in which their rhetoric directly influenced the Conservative partisan narrative.\footnote{For more how Kuffert defines the interests of his “cultural critics”, see \textit{A Great Duty}, pp. 10-12. For more on Massolin’s so-called anti-modern “tory” intellectuals, see \textit{Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity}, pp. 4-6.} In particular, Massolin shows how intellectuals like Donald Creighton criticized the Liberals for their contributions to the sterile political environment of the 1950s, yet fails to find any connections between the political programme of contemporary Conservative politicians and their intellectual
counterparts. A closer look at the evidence reveals the extent to which English Canadian intellectuals and politicians worked together to grapple with the “challenges of modernity” and undercut the Liberal narrative of Canadian history. Although the transatlantic facets of their work are ignored by Massolin, they were also very much in tune with debates going on about the future of Conservatism in Britain. Politicians consulted intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic as they prepared papers on the history of Conservative political thought and action in Canada. They shared the same broad aim of reviving the forgotten past and occupying the centre of mainstream political discourse.

Gordon Churchill was the first politician to take part in the Conservative party’s intellectual revival. He had worked in Manitoba as both a lawyer and a teacher, served with distinction in both World Wars, and returned home to pursue a career in politics at the provincial level before winning the seat of Winnipeg South Centre in 1951. Although initially possessed of few connections among the Bay Street Tory elite, by the mid-1950s he was increasingly known as a proficient political strategist. In early 1954, Churchill wrote a pamphlet entitled, The Conservative Position: a Statement of Philosophy and Principles, in which he called for a revised Conservatism that could meet the challenges of a new postwar era. An abridged version was later produced and distributed among “party workers who have frequently asked for basic information about the party” for the express purpose of informing them of the links between “principles, party and program” and elaborating on the differences between Liberalism and Conservatism. Churchill’s work was soon integrated into the speeches of the Progressive Conservative party leader, George Drew, and recycled in a much longer and more elaborate

102 Ibid., pp. 254-258.
pamphlet entitled, “Our Second Century,” which celebrated more than one hundred years of Conservatism in Canada.105

Like Conservatives before him, Churchill took his inspiration from Britain. Of particular interest to him was the Tory politician and political thinker, Quintin Hogg, from whose work Churchill essentially cribbed the better part of his treatise.106 As in Hogg’s book, The Case for Conservatism (1947), Churchill’s statement of philosophy and principles was organized around such themes as: the religious basis of society; natural conservatism; the creed of continuity; the belief in progress; the rule of law; honouring the Crown; safeguarding the Constitution; maintaining the Commonwealth; and upholding the supremacy of the Commons.107 Hogg described the function of Conservatism in the modern world as to protect, apply, and revive what is best in the old. “He therefore is a true Conservative,” Hogg explained:

Who seeks to fit the old culture, the old humanism, the old Christian tradition of Europe to the world of radar and the atomic bomb, in such a way that our Christianity masters the bomb and not the bomb our Christianity. Upon the success of his endeavours largely depends the question whether the brave new world will be a paradise or a purgatory for the common man.108

In his own treatise, Churchill took a similar tack, arguing that despite what the Liberal Party might say, Canadian Conservatism was not the enemy of progress. For him, it was possible to be progressive while at the same time protecting the moral moorings of Canadian society—Christianity, the mixed constitution, and the real and symbolically meaningful elements

107 See Quintin Hogg, The Case for Conservatism (London: Penguin Books, 1947). The ideas laid out in Hogg’s chapter on “The Liberal Heresy” bear a striking resemblance to ideas that Progressive Conservatives in Canada had about the Liberal Party’s management of the economy. These ideas will be explored later in chapter 4.
108 Ibid., 15.
of the British tradition. In the face of Soviet and American imperialism, Conservatism was, in Churchill’s eyes, “an essential element in making progress safe and effectual.” Conservatism “served to control the zeal of the radical for advance lest evil shall result from the change.” The Progressive Conservative party endeavoured “to harmonize progressive action with Conservatism, to strike the happy mean between too much haste and too great delay, to lop off the mouldered branch but preserve the main trunk, to remove the obstacles to progress without destroying the continuity of that progress.”

Churchill’s employment of Tennyson’s metaphor of lopping of the mouldered branch but preserving the main trunk was a tribute to the notion of splendid compromise. Carping Liberal critics who abused the Tories for being traditionalists and repressors of reform did not see that it was far more daring and original for a politician to defend conventionality than to support a cart-load of unthinking revolutions, the “falsehood of extremes.” In this way moderation was not a compromise but a passion of great politicians and political thinkers devoted to the preservation of established customs, to ineradicable national constitutions, to the dignity of time and the empire of unutterable common sense.

Churchill encouraged colleagues like Davie Fulton to spread the news by writing their own expositions of Canadian conservatism. Fulton had trained as a lawyer, served in the Second World War, and was brought home by the Conservatives to run for office in the riding of Kamloops, British Columbia, in the 1945 general election. He waited until the summer of 1955,

however, to set out his thoughts on *The Conservative Position* in writing. When Fulton passed his working paper on to PC colleagues, he made it clear that it was the product of discussions with friends like Churchill as well as thinkers like John Farthing, Mason Wade, and the journalist, Judith Robinson.\(^{112}\) In a memorandum to fellow MPs, Fulton explained that the purpose of sharing the paper was to obtain suggestions for its improvement from his Conservative colleagues so that the final product could be distributed on a much wider scale.\(^{113}\) Like Churchill, he sought to reclaim Conservatism from its portrayal in the Liberal mythology and show that it was not only a progressive philosophy but that it also had a crucial role to play in postwar Canada. As he made clear in the introduction of the paper, “In light of certain disturbing features of political trends today—called by Eugene Forsey ‘creeping republicanism’—and perhaps more particularly because the Conservative position is so often misstated as a blind adherence to an outmoded form of Imperialism—the basic tenets of the Conservative position should be examined and restated.”\(^{114}\)

Fulton used the term “creeping republicanism” to reference not only to what he viewed as a widely-shared anxiety about the influence of American politics, culture, and investment in postwar Canada, but also an encroachment of republican ideology on the British tradition of mixed government. In Fulton’s eyes, all this evidence of “creeping republicanism” was far “more dangerous than an open avowal of intent to introduce that form of government as a matter of conscious policy would be.” It was a veiled and sinister threat on the part of the governing Liberal Party to renounce “the retention of the Canadian Crown as the keystones of Canadian

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\(^{114}\) See the E.D. Fulton Papers: LAC MG 32/B11/6. Although Eugene Forsey was a supporter of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, he hated Mackenzie King and his Liberal progeny with a passion. In a letter to his friend, the former Conservative leader, Arthur Meighen, Forsey decreed that, “the preservation of our history and our traditions is pre-eminently the task of the Conservative party. If it shirks that task, it has no reason for existence...The Conservative Party ought to take the lead in the face of Liberal efforts since Mackenzie King to make Canada’s heritage the property of that party.” Forsey is quoted in Franklin Milligan, *Eugene Forsey, an Intellectual Biography*, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 218.
constitutional democracy.” To Fulton, the stealthy attempts of the Liberal Party to remove important and traditional symbols like the Red Ensign from national public life, to strip the word “Dominion” from the country’s name, and, in so doing remove the implicit reference to the nation’s colonial past, or to remove the word “Royal” from the historical “Royal Mail,” was proof of the Liberal-continentalist political agenda. \footnote{115} “Wherever Conservatives see the outward expression of what can only be an inner indifference or hostility, however carefully concealed,” Fulton warned, “they will attack both the sentiment and its expression.”\footnote{116}

In Fulton’s eyes, the nation was founded on an explicit rejection of republicanism. Its survival was testament to the importance of the retention of the British connection as an antidote to the lethal absorption of American politics and culture. Like his hero, John A. Macdonald, Fulton’s was a legal mind. And, like Sir John, Fulton believed that Canada’s “mixed constitution” which balanced the powers of the Crown, Parliament, and the people, was a central point from which the nation’s culture, politics, and economy emanated. \footnote{117} Even at a time when Canada’s very survival was threatened by American power, when Liberal intellectuals and politicians like Goldwin Smith and Wilfrid Laurier called for continental integration, John A. Macdonald protected Canada’s British heritage by “strongly opposing a plan to enter into intimate commercial relations with the United States.”\footnote{118} For Fulton, Macdonald pioneering “National Policy” made it plain that Conservatives could be both proponents of the British Empire and Canadian nationalists. Like Creighton, he located Macdonald’s policies and ideology within a larger Atlantic Conservative tradition, numbering British Conservatives like Lord Dufferin as among his closest allies in the fight for the nation’s survival. As Lord Dufferin

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{115} Although successive Liberal governments had refrained from using the word Dominion when referring to Canada in the postwar period, it was not until the passage of the Canada Act in 1982 that the world Dominion was formally removed.\textsuperscript{116} E.D. Fulton, “The Conservative Position,” 5: LAC MG 32/B11/Vol. 6.\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 4.\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 16.}
explained, “the forces of gravitation, unbalanced by the influence of the British connection which now overcome it would drag her straight into the bosom of the great Republic.”\footnote{Ibid, 17.}

Historically, then, it had been left to Conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic to remind Canadians of the importance of the British element of their heritage. To Fulton, the same was true in the postwar period. As the sole defenders of the nation and its British heritage in the postwar period, Conservative politicians and political thinkers bore the responsibility of re-acquainting Canadians with their true national history. When Fulton wrote to congratulate Creighton on the publication of John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain in January 1956, he intimated that the two men were fighting a common, partisan cause. “Everyone to whom I have spoken,” Fulton exclaimed, “is filled with admiration for the contribution you have made to the understanding of Canadian political history, the correction of a false mythology and, it must be confessed, a clearer understanding even by Conservatives of the basic principles of their party.”\footnote{See the E. Davie Fulton’s letter to Donald Creighton, 23 January 1956: LAC, MG 32/B11/Vol. 6.}

There is little evidence that John Diefenbaker took an active part of the correspondence taking place among English Canadian Conservative politicians and intellectuals like Davie Fulton, Donald Creighton, and Gordon Churchill in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Yet he was part of the same struggle, both to revive the Conservative party narrative and tell it and sell it to the public. Diefenbaker referred to the 1940s and 1950s as “the crusading years” for a reason.\footnote{John Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, the Crusading Years1895-1956 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975).}

His formative years as a Member of Parliament for Lake Centre and later, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan were spent as an outsider in the Conservative caucus. He remained aloof as the underwhelming Conservative leader, George Drew, struggled to differentiate the Tory programme from that of the omnibus Liberals.
From a distance, Diefenbaker observed Drew’s failure to peddle the Tory narrative and build a popular persona of his own. As Dalton Camp, an up-and-coming Tory public relations man put it during the general election of 1953, Drew and his inner circle “saw the electorate like a jury, and election campaigns as great debates where logic, persuasion, and forensic skills of trained advocates… were the real tools of victory.”

“Gorgeous George,” the rich and handsome Bay Street Toronto lawyer, was a perfect foil for a wiry orator and fiery prairie populist. As a “lone wolf” with few connections with the Tory establishment, Diefenbaker discovered that generating buzz as a platform orator was the best means of building a public reputation. Years spent languishing in the political wasteland of the Tory backbench taught him the importance of image craft and good public relations. Perhaps more importantly, he learned that partisan narratives and their struggle were crucial to the project of rule in Canada and could, in more prosaic fashion, determine the results of elections.

Like his counterparts in the Progressive Conservative party and the Tory intelligentsia, Diefenbaker knew that signs, symbols, and storytelling were essential to partisan struggle. A youth spent in the Canadian prairies reading the biographies of “great statesmen” impressed upon young John that politics was war fought by other means. He boiled politics down to a series of clashes of values and believed that it was the responsibility of great man to reconcile them. In his memoirs, Diefenbaker claimed that:

For me, the election campaign was a test involving more than votes… I had come of age politically, and my candidacy was a public declaration of my political faith. My Conservatism was rooted in the traditions of Sir John A. Macdonald, of Disraeli, and of Burke. ‘A disposition to preserve and the

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124 For example, see John Meisel, The Canadian General Election of 1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 27; Bruce Hutchison, Mr. Prime Minister (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 318; Patrick Nicholson, Vision and Indecision (Toronto: Longmans Canada, 1968), 30, 103; Peter Stursberg, Leadership Gained (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 30; Denis Smith, Rogue Tory (Toronto: MacFarlane and Ross, 1995), 215.
ability to improve, taken together, would be the standard of a statesman.’ So said Edmund Burke and so did I believe.  

As his career in federal politics took off in the late 1940s, he delivered speeches over English Canadian airwaves, quoting directly from conservative Whigs like Edmund Burke and the more contemporary British Foreign Secretary, the Conservative, Anthony Eden, who would fight “against utopian innovations” to preserve British traditions and the Conservative “way of life.” Diefenbaker believed that his was a profoundly Conservative approach to leadership that harkened back to the days of Disraeli, when great politicians pitted their wits and oratorical skills against an abstract, revolutionary, cosmopolitan Liberalism in order to reinvigorate for posterity the noblest, traditional British-Canadian values. “The essence of Conservatism,” he proclaimed, “is that we conserve those things which are good, maintain those institutions of the past which have proven their worth, and couple the past with the present by making those changes which experience—not experiment—demands.”

In setting out his own thoughts on the Conservative position, Diefenbaker was confronting a problem made urgent by his Conservative intellectual and political contemporaries. Whether they were sitting on the backbench of the official opposition, in cramped ivory tower offices, or unsung journalists, Conservatives looked on in horror as political stasis tore holes in the moral fabric of the nation. What they saw was a nation under siege and a Liberal government that would do nothing about it. And so from the late 1940s until well into the mid 1950s, their public talk, monographs, political pamphlets, and campaign material focused on the Conservative position. In these early days their efforts were unorganized; although Creighton was a known entity, speeches made and treatise written by the likes of Churchill, Fulton, and Diefenbaker remained relatively obscure. Yet as they embarked on the seemingly impossible

task of unseating the Liberal “government” party, this small, unorganized band of Tories was joined politicians like Donald Fleming, journalists like Judith Robinson, and academics and political thinkers like Eugene Forsey, Hugh Thorburn, and John Farthing—all of whom made a concerted effort to break away from the margins of Canadian political discourse to tell the Conservative national narrative and convince the public that there was a viable alternative to Liberalism in North America.\textsuperscript{127}

2— Tories versus Grits: Myth and Ideological Style

After seven years of observing John G. Diefenbaker hone his political style and even more watching as the Progressive Conservative party attempted to polarize political discourse along traditional partisan lines, Peter C. Newman announced that he had finally discovered “how to tell the Grits from the Tories.” In “Peter C. Newman’s Handbook for Voters,” a short article written for Maclean’s in the heat of the 1962 federal election which pitted Diefenbaker against Lester B. Pearson, Newman sympathized with readers who found it difficult to differentiate between Canada’s two leading political parties. Both Pearson and Diefenbaker, he argued, followed “the same cardinal laws of Canadians politics; to be successful, national leaders must advocate nothing that might disturb the nation’s delicately balanced regional, racial, and economic differences.” “There is really a difference” he insisted, but it could not be discerned “in party platforms... or even in the two party’s records of power.” Rather it was in the way that Grits and Tories imagined their partisan identities, the symbols and metaphors they used to tell and sell their party platforms. “First, you have to remember where the two old parties come from,” he contended, “then you have to see which way they still jump when someone pricks them for words like inflation, tariff, Quebec, Yankee, crown, or empire.” The two parties acted “from entirely different sets of prejudices”: “The Tories” traced their origins back “to the Family Compact, Orange Order, Sir John A, the Queen, and the Empire,” while “the Grits” looked to “Quebec’s rouges, Clear Grits of Ontario, and anti-monarchist rebels of 1837.”128

Newman had spent years attending political rallies and standing in the press gallery of the House of Commons. He knew that Conservative and Liberal narratives were symbolic and mythic expressions of ideology that were transmitted to voters through dramatic political battles.

He understood partisan narratives to be the sets of ideas, passions and styles that gave intellectual and emotional substance to the political arena, creating drama and conflict.\(^{129}\) The warring narratives of Canada’s two leading political parties were poetic constructions of tremendous economy, compression, and mnemonic devices capable of evoking a complex system of historical associations by a single image or phrase. After years of political struggle, through frequent retellings and deployments as a source of interpretive metaphors, Conservative and Liberal narratives had been abstracted until they were reduced to deeply encoded and resonant sets of symbols, “icons,” “keywords,” or historical clichés. In this form they became shapers of political discourse, two poles of meaning around which competing political factions organized their ideas, framed political debates, and even built political platforms. They were the tinted lenses through which Grits and Tories viewed themselves, the nation, and its place in the world.\(^{130}\)

As we have seen, Liberal and Conservative narratives were formulated as ways of explaining problems that arose in the course of historical experience, the most important and longest-lived of which developed around areas of concern that persisted over long periods of time. Yet no narrative, however internally consistent and harmonious, is proof against all historical contingencies. In postwar Canada, Cold War, the end of empire, the influx of foreign investment, mass culture and consumption, rural-urban migration, and religious decline produced a crisis that could not be fully explained or controlled by invoking the received wisdom embodied in the old partisan narratives. Disruptions like these required both political parties to analyze and revise the intellectual/moral content of their partisan narratives. In the end, as the

\(^{129}\) Interview with Peter C. Newman, 4 April 2007.

historical experience of the postwar crisis was memorialized and abstracted, it would be the party and politicians who best blended old formulas with new ideas and concerns that would win the day.

Over the course of nearly two decades, the Liberal party had successfully managed to link the sustained economic growth, increasingly widespread prosperity, and improving social programmes enjoyed by most Canadians after the Second World War to its own partisan narrative of good technocratic management. Five successive Liberal governments led by Mackenzie King and his hand-picked successor, Louis St. Laurent, had delivered a narrative of “unity, security, and freedom” to Canadians.\(^\text{131}\) For the Liberal party, a happy and apathetic electorate which relished the status quo was good thing. Indeed it was said that throughout the “western” world, in countries like Canada, Britain, and the United States, a “pragmatic consensus” had been accepted surrounding the question of social security.\(^\text{132}\) As a consequence of the improved quality of life and general acceptance of the welfare state, it was argued that the great political ideologies of the nineteenth century had lost the ability to mobilize people and that the “end of ideology” was at hand.\(^\text{133}\) Consequently, as Newman and others reported at the time, in English Canada it was difficult to differentiate between two omnibus political parties that, however pragmatically and contingently, accepted the welfare state.\(^\text{134}\)


\(^{133}\) The “end of ideology” thesis of the post-war period is most often associated with the work of the American sociologist, Daniel Bell: see The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

\(^{134}\) For example, see W.J. Jenkins, “Groupthink,” Canadian Commentator, Toronto, Ont., May 1957; “There is a “grey fog of liberalism extending over the country” op/ed., The Globe and Mail, 19 January 1956; in his regular column, Purely Personal, J.E. Belliveau exclaimed that “Politics is Paradox!” Conservatives were acting like
As much as Grits and Tories resembled one another in their policies and practices, the inflamed political rhetoric that characterized the postwar period reveals the "end of ideology" thesis as a blind alley. What really counted in the federal political struggles of the 1950s was not ideology or consensus on welfare state measures but the re-establishment of a relationship of war between two historical and political narratives. Even as Liberals depicted themselves as the party of postwar political consensus, critics began to question the value of a political system that was devoid of competing visions, morals, and ideas. Debates over the dangers of consensus to the party system in Canada and, more generally, to the Liberal government’s own “progressive” agenda provided fodder for the opposition. The Progressive Conservative party launched a sustained, partisan attack on the government’s domestic and foreign policy. Theirs was an oppositional guerrilla war which did not challenge liberal modes of governance or the implementation of welfare measures so much as it undercut the Liberal narrative of consensus by adapting to new postwar circumstances and moving towards the centre of mainstream political discourse. To translate the ideology of progressivism and "natural conservatism" into the language of popular myth, Conservative intellectuals and politicians had to "modernize" both the character of the traditional Conservative nation-builder and the setting of his adventure. As they engaged their Liberal enemies in a series of political battles through the course of the 1950s, the Progressive Conservatives resolved the problem by transforming the Tory imperialist and man of privilege into a populist reformer and by transferring him from the Victorian parlour to an urban or imperial frontier. Diefenbaker was the lucky inheritor of this nascent Tory narrative, the beneficiary of an organization that was already on the up and up.

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liberals, Liberals were being conservative—both parties were going against their founding philosophies, and it was “difficult to tell which is which,” The Toronto Star, Friday 31 May 1957.

135 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended (New York: Picador, 1997), 162.
Scholars of political and intellectual history in English Canada have recently revisited the postwar era for the purpose of providing a more nuanced historiography on the question of Liberal consensus. Drawing on the work of historians who differentiate between the ideological bias and political rhetoric of Labour and Conservative parties in postwar Britain, for instance, Penny Bryden examines the differences between the Liberal government of Mackenzie King and the Ontario and provincial government of George Drew as deriving from a clash of personalities rather than an ideological conflict. By focusing on the Ontario government’s diplomatic challenges to the Liberal government’s post-war Green book, Bryden discredits the notion that Canada’s post-war social security state was derived solely from the left-centre of the Liberal party and views it rather as a product of negotiation with the Right.136

A critical analysis of the rhetoric of wartime consensus in Canada has also been undertaken by José Igartua, who purports to uncover the existence of “multiple and ambiguous” public discourses in English Canada.137 The analytical pigeonhole through which he views the fights between Grits and Tories— as one between Liberal progressives and Conservative reactionaries— bears a marked resemblance, however, to the Whig narrative of history that he aims to subvert.138 In the twenty years following the Second World War, Igartua argues that the end of empire created a schism within English Canada’s political culture between progressive Liberals who believed that the Canadian identity should be rooted in civic definitions of citizenship and their reactionary Conservative counterparts who championed the British

138 Ibid., 4.
definition of the Canadian identity.\textsuperscript{139} Igartua deftly shows how national identities are shaped in the realm of public discourse and formed in the political arena by intellectuals and politicians.

Yet unlike Bryden, whose account of political battles between Mackenzie King and George Drew reveals two sides engaged in a process of negotiation, there are no shades of gray in Igartua’s rendering of Liberal and Tory partisans, only rigid ideological differences. As in other stories of Canada’s journey from British colony to an autonomous nation, Conservatism is viewed as an isolated political phenomenon, its proponents dismissed as irrational, peripheral, episodic, and fighting against the inexorable forces of progress and modernity.\textsuperscript{140}

Conservatism and Liberalism in postwar Canada cannot simply be read as a response of politicians and intellectuals to the Cold War, modernity, the end of empire, or the end of ideology.\textsuperscript{141} Partisan identities are not “totalizing fictions” in which single categories of experience, say ideology or ethnicity, should rule out other elements such as race, religious creed, class, gender or even changing power relations.\textsuperscript{142} Similarly, they cannot be viewed as having been conceived in a political vacuum apart from transatlantic currents of thought and separate from the actions and stories told by political foes.\textsuperscript{143} Escaping these ideological

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\item Igartua judges those who voiced support for both sides of the argument as oblivious to the contradiction between these two visions of Canadianness. Ibid., 62.
\item For the orthodox interpretation, which sees the Cold War as the matrix of post-war conservatism, see Elaine Tyler May, \textit{Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era} (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 8; Reginald Whitaker, \textit{Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), esp. the introduction. On anti-modernism as the prism through which we should view political discourse in the post-war period, see Massolin, \textit{Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity}, 1939-70, pp. 3-4; On viewing political conflict as it was shaped by the end of empire, see José Igartua, “‘Ready, Aye, Ready’ No More? Canada, Britain, and the Suez Crisis in the Canadian Press in Phillip Buckner’s \textit{Canada and the End of Empire} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), pp. 47-65.
\item Republican revisionists like J.G. A. Pocock proved as much in their rejection of Louis Hartz. See J.G.A. Pocock, \textit{The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition} (N.J.: Princeton
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dichotomies means acknowledging partisan identities to be relational and flexible, formed in opposition to the ever-changing narratives of “the other,” attached to cultural and institutional frameworks larger than the single individual, and yet tailored to character and circumstance. Like all other narratives, these stories are fragmented, contradictory, and partial; they contain drama, plot, explanation, and selective criteria. Consequently, it is through the course of partisan struggle—the act of telling, re-telling, and selling the partisan narrative in competition with one’s enemies—that politicians like John G. Diefenbaker and Lester B. Pearson took on the political identities of true Tories and Grits.

Although the Liberals were under the gun in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, at mid-century the “government party” appeared to have felled all of its competitors. The Conservative party, still smarting after the fallout of the Conscription Crisis of 1917 and divided over how to approach the growth of socialism had been easily outmanoeuvred. Through a deft act of appropriation, Mackenzie King defeated the onslaught of the prairie Progressives and provided the Liberals with a fresh story of reform. It was a narrative that would remain relevant during the Second World War and through the course of postwar reconstruction until well into the 1950s. Indeed, the famous slogan “King or Chaos!” perfectly encapsulated the message the Liberal party delivered to voters as late as 1957. As Lionel Chevrier, the Liberal Member of Parliament for the Quebec riding of Laurier put it, “the Liberal party has better leadership, better

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145 See “Canada: King or Chaos!” *Time*, Monday 23 September 1935.
candidates, better policies and more experience in the affairs of our country than any other party.”¹⁴⁶ In his eyes there was no real alternative to Liberalism.

Not surprisingly, the Liberal narrative of good technocratic management used the same images, metaphors, and symbols employed by the popular press, bureaucrats, and corporate interests in the postwar period. Telling and selling the success story of postwar Canada was a winning strategy for everyone involved. The title page of the government publication *Canada 1957, The Official Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress* published by the Dominion Bureau of statistics, boasts a quote from Pericles, the Athenian statesman and general of the ancient city’s “Golden Age”:

> Fix your eyes on the greatness of your country as you have it before you day by day, fall in love with her, and when you feel her great, remember that her greatness was won by men with courage, with knowledge of their duty, and with a sense of honour in action, who, even if they failed in some venture, would not think of depriving the country of their powers but laid them at her feet as their fairest offering.¹⁴⁷

Accompanying the text are scattered images of rising cityscapes, factories, working farms, the Peace Tower, the symbol of atomic energy, all of which are connected by linear white lines to a snapshot of happy, productive Canadians, blue and white collar workers, nurses, doctors, policemen, firemen and farmers. References to man’s mastery over the natural world, the imposition of law and order on the untamed land and its peoples, the act of building a nation through the combination of rigorous physical toil, and enlightened governance would have made a lot of sense to people who believed that Canada was embarking on a “Golden Age” of its own.¹⁴⁸

The politicization of culture reveals the centrality of storytelling to the project of governance in postwar Canada. Like the metals and minerals that had lain dormant for so long

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¹⁴⁸ Ibid. There was talk of a new Golden, ‘Elizabethan Age’ in Britain, too. See Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2007), 118.
under the hard rock of the Precambrian Shield, there seemed to be a vast and untapped resource of Canadian nationalism that was waiting to be mined. Bruce Hutchison was dispatched by *Maclean’s* to "Rediscover the Unknown Country." Yousuf Karsh was sent from sea to sea exploring the face of the nation in photograph. The young Pierre Berton seized on the new market for romantic Canadian literature by penning *The Mysterious North: Encounters with the Canadian Frontier, 1947-1954*, a popular history of Canada that won the Governor General’s Award in 1957. The National Film Board of Canada put the topic of Canada’s embrasure of modernity to film by producing a series in the mid-1950s entitled "The Future Unlimited," made up of segments on developments in Canadian “Agriculture,” “Citizenship and Community,” “Industry,” “Geography and Travel,” “Canada and the World,” designed “to appeal to audiences in all regions of Canada.” Liberal party headquarters tellingly snapped up and distributed the film to candidates running in the federal election of 1957—documentary proof that it was the Liberal party which was responsible for the era of good feeling.

It is a common complaint of the children of the 1950s that their parents’ force-fed them this celebratory pablum of cultural quiescence, social conformity, and political consensus. “We were always being told that Canada had come of age,” Margaret Atwood later recalled: “the main idea behind the way we were taught Canadian history seemed to be reassurance as a country, we’d had our little differences, and a few embarrassing moments—the Rebellion of 1837, the hanging of Louis Riel, and so forth—but these had just been unseemly burps in one

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149 Bruce Hutchison’s articles in *Maclean’s* were eventually published in his first book, *The Unknown Country*, which became a bestseller when published in 1942. Hutchison’s was a clarion call for Canadians to shed the colonial and seek their own national identity. See Bruce Hutchison, *The Unknown Country* (Toronto: Coward-McCann, 1942).


long gentle after-dinner nap.” Those who are contemptuous of the grey conformism of the 1950s, however, often ignore the extent to which mainstream public opinion favoured positive government action in the realm of employment, social security, and the promotion of social cohesion —anything, really, to prevent the return of financial insecurity and poverty of the interwar years. The Liberal party’s well publicized plans for reconstruction after the Second World War were wide ranging and deemed by many as being quite necessary, designed as they were to address the problem of the demobilization of Canada’s armed forces and their reintegration into civilian life, and the transition from wartime to a peacetime economy.

The secret to the Liberal party’s success in the postwar period lay in its ability to articulate its political program in a way that would associate the widely popular, nation-building plan of reconstruction with its highly successful management of the country’s affairs. Consumption and citizenship, freedom and security, nation-building and the centralization of state power were construed as a lived, national experience. According to Lester B. Pearson, “Liberalism in Canada is a national political creed. It is the instrument through which the Canadian people sought the goals of freedom, security and prosperity… through a strong

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national government and legislative programs for reform."\textsuperscript{156} The Liberal ethic that promoted national efficiency, postwar recovery and security was echoed in the period’s print advertising. As Leonard Kuffert has shown, advertising firms capitalized on planning’s current currency by conceiving campaigns that identified planning with security. Adverts selling everything from beer to bank accounts reflected cultural habits and norms that had persisted since the Depression, emphasizing the importance of industriousness, planning, and consumption as a way that citizens could contribute positively and individually to the nation-building project.\textsuperscript{157}

The content of the Liberal narrative and its staying power can be attributed to a relationship of mutual exchange between the civil service, the popular press, and the governing party that was unprecedented in Canadian politics. Proponents of Liberalism occupied strategic positions within the public realm and shared the belief that enlightened governance was Canada’s best hope for successfully meeting the challenges posed by a modern, industrial world threatened by Soviet communism. Since the turn-of-the-century, the idea that an enlightened governing class of intellectuals might rise up and steer a bewildered herd floundering in the “chaos of local opinions” was being debated in Europe, the United States as well as in Canada.\textsuperscript{158} Although most mandarins were not the “scions” of Canada’s privileged urban elite, they were men (not women) who were educated far above the average.\textsuperscript{159} And in their capacity as leading members of a burgeoning civil service, they naturally looked to the state and a number of

\textsuperscript{156} Quote taken Pearson’s introduction to J.W. Pickersgill’s \textit{The Liberal Party} (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1962), pp. ii-iii.


\textsuperscript{159} Robert Bothwell, Ian M. Drummond, John English, \textit{Canada since 1945: power politics, and provincialism} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 118.
nongovernmental organizations as vehicles of reform.\textsuperscript{160} With the power of law and extensive resources at their command, men like Brooke Claxton, Lester B. Pearson, J.W. Pickersgill, Mitchell Sharp, Clifford Clark, and W.A. Mackintosh believed that the state was the most logical agency to intervene on behalf of the individual in the new, complex postwar society.\textsuperscript{161} That most of these prominent technocrats became Liberal cabinet ministers is not surprising; as early proponents of liberal internationalism, national autonomy, and social security, they looked to Liberalism to accommodate their specific partisan needs. It is in this way that the Liberal party’s political aims became enmeshed with those of expert bureaucrats who had an active interest in establishing new and necessary links between citizen and government.

The popular press was another means by which the Liberal narrative was told and sold to the public. Like their friends in the civil service, leading Ottawa journalists such as Blair Fraser, Grant Dexter, Bruce Hutchison, and later, Tom Kent, were attracted to the style, personality, ideas and power of the Liberal party. They too were internationalists, opponents of the colonial mindset, and believers in positive state action that the implementation of “progressive” policies entailed.\textsuperscript{162} The quid pro quo relationship which existed among some members of the popular press and their pals in the bureaucracy and the House of Commons might have compromised journalistic integrity —but the benefits far outweighed the consequences. The alliance allowed the government to effectively communicate its program of enlightened, progressive reform to the public while at the same time enabling parliamentary reporters to be the first to get the news.\textsuperscript{163}

According to Tom Kent, who was new to the scene having just immigrated to Canada from


\textsuperscript{161} Doug Owram, \textit{The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 153.


\textsuperscript{163} Brennan, \textit{Reporting the Nation’s Business}, 144.
England in 1954, “there is no doubt at all that the average Ottawa correspondent felt that he had to ‘stand in’ with the government in order to get the news.” “At times,” he recalls, a journalist “went out of his way to do something extra for a minister who gave him a special handout… I think it possible that in some cases the reporter reached out to please the powers that be rather than to deprive a member of the opposition of the attention a particular performance called for.”

The sentimental Whig narrative that flowed from the pens of Blair Fraser and Bruce Hutchison was a powerful means by which the Liberal interpretation of Canadian history was formulated from the interwar years to the mid-1950s. Stories like that of the failed uprising of the Liberal rebel William Lyon Mackenzie at once became hidden triumphs of liberty and progress over Family Compacts and colonial oligarchs. If journalists, as the *Toronto Telegram* proclaimed back in 1889, were “the lungs of civilization, inhaling current history, science, art, politics, theology, literature, and social problems and assimilating them to the people from the highest to the lowest,” there were many of their number who played a key role in connecting English Canadian citizens to the “enlightened” Liberal narrative during and after the war.

The relationship of mutual exchange that developed at mid-century between some members of the popular press, civil service, and a government that had been in power for over two decades provided the ideal means by which the Liberal government could get its message of consensus out. As we shall see, before the advent of television, communication strategies like this were effective, efficient, and easily done on the cheap. It was in this way that the images and sentiments advertised in party literature could be strategically placed in newspapers, magazines and on the radio to spread the Liberal word. It was a message of postwar liberal

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164 Interview with Tom Kent, 22 February 2007.
(small ‘l’ and big ‘L’) consensus which made the subtle argument that to be Liberal was to accept certain relations with others, to adopt a specific, historically moulded vocabulary (“progress,” “reform,” “innovation,” “strong government”), and to work within certain institutional constraints while debating meaning within the community. To be Liberal was to orient oneself to the past in accordance to a specific set of partisan values and ideas. To be Liberal was to plan but also to be pragmatic, to adjust to the contingency of the nation itself. To be Liberal was a matter of circumstances that had been summarized as relational, cultural, historical, and contingent.\(^{167}\)

No political narrative can be maintained mechanically or conspiratorially. For any Canadian political party, staying in power is a continual process and by the mid 1950s the tide of popular opinion was beginning to turn. The Liberal party organization had bound itself so thoroughly to the civil service and powerful cabinet ministers that it lost touch with its extra-parliamentary grass-roots organizations and voters on the ground.\(^{168}\) It would be over simplistic, however, to attribute the defeat of Liberalism in 1957 to the rot that ate at the party from within. As time wore on, some of the scholars, journalists, and politicians who had been so essential to the telling and selling of the Liberal narrative began to view it as archaic and uninspired. As Tom Kent later observed of the Liberals’ predicament, “it is inherent in the nature of political parties that when they are enjoying success they are insensitive to indications that the basis of their success is being eroded.”\(^{169}\) And so with St. Laurent and his expert cabinet ministers who were so sure of their control of mainstream political discourse that they ran the postwar election


campaigns of 1953 and 1957 on little more than their record of achievement. In the face of all this change, the position of the Liberals as a middle-of-the-road party which held the broad central avenue of politics and confined its enemies to narrow paths on either side was swiftly eroding.

As the structures of social life transformed at mid-century, the boundaries of common-sense reality began to shift under the feet of aged cabinet ministers. Changes in material and cultural life bred changes in moral and political perception. The decline of Christian churches in North America, the massive influx of immigrants from Europe, and the slow but steady push towards a more pluralistic society were just beginning to make their impact on political discourse in Canada. Among certain circles, King and St. Laurent’s ostensible turn towards the United States and away from Britain during and after the Second World War provoked a backlash against the Liberals’ external policy. Mass culture and consumption, rural-urban migration, and technocratic governance provoked anxiety about the effects of “over-civilization” and conformity in North America. Public relations, advertising, propaganda, film, and television were just beginning to change the ways that voters and politicians communicated with one

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172 Intellectuals in publications like the The Canadian Forum and the International Journal were engaged in an ongoing debate about what some believed to be an apparently anti-British Liberal foreign policy. For example, see Gabriel Gersh, “Imperialism and Literature,” The Canadian Forum, November 1956; J.H. Aitchinson, “Canadian Foreign Policy in the House and on the Hustings,” International Journal, Fall 1957; George Ferguson, “Canada and the Atlantic Alliance,” International Journal, Spring 1957.

173 Paul Litt examines anti-modernism in public commentary on The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences in The Muses, the Masses, the Massey Commission (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Phillip Massolin rather problematically finds complaints about modern life as being limited to certain “tory” intellectuals in Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity, 1939-1970 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); In A Great Duty (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), Leonard Kuffert looks more generally and the responses of cultural critics to such topics as war, reconstruction, science, conformity, personality, and commemoration; Christopher Dummitt traces of history of what happened when men’s supposed modernity became one of their defining features in The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).
another. In light of all this change, the Liberal narrative that was so certain of itself at the end of the Second World War seemed increasingly out of place.

There were many who laid the blame for the malaise in Canadian politics in the 1950s, the absence of meaningful political debate and the tedious quality of the brokerage model, at the feet of Mackenzie King. Critics from across the political spectrum—some of whom were card-carrying Liberals—began to question the suitability of the brokerage political model as a means of grappling with the changing social, cultural, and economic conditions of the postwar world. They argued that by the end of the 1940s, King’s centrist metaphysics had contributed to the erosion of parliamentary government and the perversion political life. The liberal-leaning historian, Frank H. Underhill, went so far as to publicly proclaim that the public had lost confidence in the Liberals’ propensity to reform and that a “The Revival of Conservatism in North America” was at hand.

The first public stirrings of dissent from within and outside of the Liberal ranks occurred in the winter of 1946, during what is now known as the “Gouzenko Affair.” Earlier that year, the government had been advised by a member of the Russian embassy, Igor Gouzenko, of the activities of an alleged spy ring in Canada wherein members of the Canadian Civil Service and others were found to be connected to a vast conspiracy to furnish information on classified, official materials to the Russians. On 5 February 1946, King informed his cabinet about the Gouzenko case. Ten days later, after the first of a series of arrests were made he informed Canadians of the creation of the Royal Commission known informally as the Kellock-Tashereau Commission after the two Supreme Court judges who headed the inquiry. The commission was

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174 One critic went so far as to argue that King’s distrust of Parliament and his resort to “plebiscitary democracy” had contributed to the erosion of parliamentary government and to an unprincipled regime that “rots Canadian life like fungus rots a log.” Review of N.A. Benson, “None of it Came Easy: The Story of James Garfield Gardiner,” *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXVII (December 1956), 367.


given a wide mandate and extraordinary legal powers to arrest a number of persons and confine
them to police barracks incommunicado, some of them for several weeks. There they questioned
them severely, employing what the Emergency Committee for Civil Rights called “Gestapo
methods.” Eventually Kellock and Tashereau reported on the activities of the accused and in
some instances expressed the opinion that they were guilty as charged.

Although the strong feeling that existed against Russia among the Canadian public tended
to compensate for King’s harsh treatment of the traitors, a number of intellectuals, journalists and
politicians spoke out against the government. One was Arthur Lower, the Canadian historian
whose book, Colony to Nation, stands out today as the penultimate example of the Whig
narrative of Canadian history. Throughout the trial, however, Lower found his partisan loyalties
 sorely tested. In a letter written to the journalist, Blair Fraser, whose recent radio commentary
had criticized the extraordinary measures the government had taken against the suspects in the
name of “national security,” Lower asked for advice as to how the Winnipeg Civil Liberties
Association might get involved: “Organizations such as ours do not wish to go off at half-cock
but we would like to make a good solid statement. My own feeling is that the War Measures Act
itself must be got rid of and after… Mr. King’s government must be got rid of. The pattern, to

178 For coverage of the “Gouzenko Affair” on radio and television, visit the CBC archives online:
http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/national_security/topics/72/. See, also, Robert Bothwell, Alliance and Illusion:
Canada and the World, 1945-1984 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 49; Reginald
Whitaker, Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Security State, 1945-1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto
Press, 1994), especially Part II, chapters 2-4; Frank K. Clarke, “Debilitating Divisions: The Civil Liberties
Movement in Early Cold War Canada, 1946-48” in Whose National Security? Canadian State Surveillance and the
Creation of Enemies, Gary Kinsman, Dieter K. Buse, and Mercedes Steedman, eds. (Toronto: Between the Lines,
179 For more on public opinion, see, Whitaker, Cold War Canada, 236; Park, Moscow—As Two Canadians Saw It;
speaking out against the government’s abuse of power, see, “On Magna Carta Day,” Globe and Toronto Star, 15
June 1946; “Dominion Day 1867-1946, An Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Canada,” Globe and Toronto Star,
29 June 1946.
180 Arthur Lower, Colony to Nation: A History of Canada (Toronto: Longman Canada, 1971). For more on Lower’s
involvement in the civil liberties movement, see, Arthur Lower, My First Seventy-Five Years (Toronto: Macmillan
which it seems to be conforming more and more, is not one of liberty but, thanks to the apathy of
the average Canadian, of something unpleasantly close to dictatorship.”

While a number of high profile intellectuals tried their hand at criticizing the Liberal
government during the so-called “Gouzenko Affair,” strong words rang out in the House of
Commons, as well. Even thought the Progressive Conservative leader, John Bracken, remained
silent on the issue, the Tory backbencher, John G. Diefenbaker, loudly rebuked King’s
repression of civil liberties. As Doug Fisher later observed of Diefenbaker’s contributions to the
national conversation in these early days, that “man had always been his own one man show” in
Parliament and often followed his own “political nose.” In a speech delivered in the House on
29 March 1956, Diefenbaker declared that “throughout history, under Liberal governments,
every basis of individual freedom going back to 1215… every vestige of those things we regard
as essential to the preservation of the liberty of the subject was swept aside.” “When in the
history of the British Empire,” he wondered aloud, “was any man ever denied counsel, except
under orders-in-council passed by this government?” “The suspected spies had been jailed,” he
charged, “until they incriminated themselves.” Diefenbaker’s rebuke was the first significant
assault on the bastions of Liberalism in the postwar period which sought specifically to
undermine the party as an institution and its narrative of liberty, progress, and reform.

Diefenbaker was joined in his critique of the King government by a number of MPs from
the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, but it was the active support of the Liberal ex-

minister, Charles Gavan (Chubby) Power in Parliament that revealed the fissures beginning to

181 Lower to Blair Fraser, 9 March 1946, and Fraser to Lower, 14 March 1946: Queen’s University Archives,
A.R.M. Lower Fonds, box 46, file C21. In his radio commentary, Fraser said: “We’ve heard this before. We heard
it used to justify the procedure in the Soviet “purge” trials of 1937. We even heard it used to defend the inquiry into
the Reichstag fire.” CBC broadcast script, March 2, 1946, Lower Fonds, box 46, file C21. Christopher MacLennan
has written extensively on the civil liberties movement in Canada in Towards the Charter: Canadians and the
182 Interview with Doug Fisher, 18 February 2007.
183 Debates 19 March 1946, 37, 56; “The Price of Liberty,” The Globe and Mail op/ed., 23 March 1946; See also
emerge within the party ranks.¹⁸⁴ In a speech delivered in Parliament, Power compared the provisions of the Magna Carta to those of the Order in Council, P.C. 644, of October 6, 1945, which stated that special agents of foreign powers which spied on Canadians could be interrogated and held without trial: “No freeman shall be arrested, imprisoned, dispossessed, outlawed, banished, or hurt in his person or property… save upon the lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land.” In defending the rights of individual citizens against the power of the state, Power believed he was speaking the language of liberalism in its broadest sense; and while admitting that King was in many respects a great liberal, he declared openly that King should have “refused to allow such legislation to be placed in the records of the people of Canada.” Power himself would not “approve even tacitly what I believe to have been a great mistake on the part of the government.” “If this is to be the funeral of Liberalism,” he proclaimed, “I do not desire to be even an honorary pallbearer at the funeral, and I do not wish by not taking part in this debate to give silent approval of the procedure which has taken place.”¹⁸⁵ Power’s conflation of liberal ideology and Liberal party principles in his speech point to the extent to which he believed that the two were inseparable. For him, if the Liberal party could not subscribe in good faith to the tenets of liberal ideology it did not deserve to govern the country.

Power broke ranks again two years later during the National Liberal Federation convention in January, 1948. Mackenzie King had finally decided, after much trepidation, to pick Louis St. Laurent to replace him. Although St. Laurent was highly regarded by most, Power viewed him as a lacklustre and even inept politician who was incapable of reinvigorating the

¹⁸⁴ Diefenbaker claims that he was the only Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament to publicly criticize the King government in its handling of the Gouzenko Affair. See Diefenbaker, One Canada, vol. 1, 225.
party with a new set principles and a revitalized vision of the nation.\textsuperscript{186} Despite the fact that he had no chance of winning the contest against Louis St. Laurent, Power entered the contest solely for the chance of airing his grievances against what he viewed as a corrupted form of Liberalism. As he later recalled in his memoirs:

> I was coming more and more to the conclusion that since I had in the past three or four years, in the House of Commons, in speeches, in magazine articles, protested against the government’s method of procedure and continued wartime controls, I could not at this time whitewash the past and give a blank cheque for the future. This was the time, when Liberals of all shades and degrees were assembled, to set forth my views, and if anyone wanted to vote for them, and for what I considered to be the true precepts of Liberalism, then I would give him an opportunity.\textsuperscript{187}

Power might have lost the leadership race, but not before inspiring one young and disillusioned Liberal to quit the party and join the Tories. At the time, Dalton Camp’s defection from the Liberal party went unnoticed; yet his abandonment of what he viewed as an aged and seemingly sterile Liberal creed reveals the extent to which the party had lost touch with its younger members. In Camp’s eyes, “It had been made clear that nothing was to be allowed to stand in the way of the business-like efficiency of the convention. The surrogates from the principalities had been treated with dispassionate, if cordial, firmness…” Much to the chagrin of younger members who sought to gain hands-on political experience and a voice in the affairs of the party, “the convention had been summoned to decide everything—to ratify the decision of the directors as to its management for the next decade—and to decide nothing (or as little as possible) and to demonstrate that there are no ways to maintain fealty other than through commitment to a cause.” To Camp, it was a politics of consensus and “pragmatism made more compelling for its graceful power… I voted for Charles G. ‘Chubby’ Power, a vote not against St

\textsuperscript{186} Power said that St. Laurent, “to all intents and purposes, came to power through the comparatively new idea of attaching more importance to the personality of a leader than to the ideas he represented.” See Power, \textit{A Party Politician}, 265.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 396.
Laurent, I told myself, but against the establishment (I marvel that I made such a
distinction)”\footnote{Dalton Camp, \textit{Gentlemen, Players, and Politicians} (Toronto: Deneau and Greenberg, 1970), 7.}

As time pressed on, Fraser, Lower, Power, and the young Camp were joined by a group of other disenchanted partisans who began to air their grievances in both private and public. A slew of correspondence between Power and fellow Liberals such as the old Liberal-Progressive Senator, T.A. Crerar and journalists like Bruce Hutchison and Grant Dexter is littered with references to the poverty of Canadian liberalism. An excellent example of the conversation going on between these men is evident in a note that Power wrote to Hutchison in spring 1951, congratulating the latter for writing an article in his local newspaper that discussed the consequences of Mackenzie King’s brokerage politics. Power agreed with Hutchison’s diagnoses and argued that while King should be given “credit for keeping the name and the façade of Liberalism alive when it was fading away in most countries of the world… he probably extinguished in thousands of his followers the spiritual inner fire of true liberalism, but at least in his preaching he continued to extol it.” Hutchison scribbled a quick note on Power’s letter—“Please read and return—good old Chubby in a clear-cut inquiry into Liberalism. A sum of what King has done to Liberalism”—and sent it off forthwith to his friend and fellow journalist, Grant Dexter.\footnote{C.G. Power to Bruce Hutchison, 21 May 1951: Glenbow, Hutchison fonds MSC 22, Box 2, File 2.5.}

Long-serving and influential Liberal partisans were thus beginning to question the sincerity and salience of the party’s narrative. Many of them were old school, laissez-faire liberals who worried that the party was “being driven to leftward extremes” by a new league of opinion-makers like Walter Gordon and Tom Kent who advocated for more social reform and a new economic nationalism.\footnote{Bruce Hutchison to Grant Dexter, 7 Dec 1960: Glenbow, Hutchison fonds, MsC22 . Box 1, File 1.} Their angst reflects a growing schism within a party that had for
over twenty years coalesced behind slow and pragmatic policies of reform. Although united through Depression, war, and the transition to peace, the Liberals had thus reached a fork in the road. It would seem that even party insiders were unsure of what lay beyond the well-worn slogan, “Unity, Freedom, and Security.” Whatever side they were on, a growing number of Liberals were conscious of the fact that there was no longer an all-encompassing and powerful narrative of Liberalism to live by.

Anxieties about the state of postwar Liberalism being aired both within and outside the party should be viewed in the context of a transatlantic debate going on at the time about the so-called “end of ideology”—a phrase coined by the American sociologist, Daniel Bell. In the early-mid 1950s, Bell and a number of scholars in the United States, Europe, and Britain began to debate the pros and cons of creedal passivity and the general narrowing of political alternatives in the “western” world. To them, it appeared that the differences between the right and the left had narrowed significantly and that the two had much in common, particularly when confronted by the challenge posed by Soviet communism. Ideological conflicts were seen to be disappearing from democratic politics as a result of “the fact that the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved; the workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and the democratic left has recognized that an increase in over-all state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for economic problems.” The apparent success of mixed economies, democratic politics, and the provision of social security led proponents of postwar consensus to believe that the trend they described was both universal in its applicability to advanced industrial societies

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and irreversible in that it reflected the needs of a new state of economic and social development in the postwar world.

The “end of ideology” was not to be borne out by events, however. In differences doses, during and after the Second World War, governments in Britain, the United States, and Canada had accepted incarnations of “liberal” democracy that incorporated elements of socialism. Yet scholars have shown that, for all parties involved, consensus on new welfare entitlements was both pragmatic and contingent, driven by the threat posed by the popularity of Labour and the CCF. The “end of ideology” scenario is thus reductionist in the sense that it ignores the ideological continuum beneath the rhetoric of consensus and modernization, papering over the complexity of political rule and the sets of ideas, passions, and styles that give intellectual and emotional substance to the political arena. Although there were basic differences in historical development that precluded the development of a transatlantic “conservative mind,” all three countries experienced a resurgence of conservatism—calls for a shift from complacency to moralism, a social order based on customary rules and norms, a renewed focus on founding principles and traditional signs and symbols. It is in this way that the debate surrounding the postwar “liberal” (small and big L) consensus imprinted the tone of political rhetoric, the drama, actions, and image craft of politics in English Canada. The challenge posed by the national and transnational conservative revival produced a clearly identifiable political moment in which John G. Diefenbaker’s surge to power should be located.

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The growing popularity of socialist parties and welfare measures in Canada and Britain constituted a problem in historical understanding with which Conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic were forced to contend. In Britain, Conservatives felt the weight of popular opinion shift to the left, as indicated by the defeat of Winston Churchill and the scale of the Labour victory in 1945.195 The shift leftwards forced a political re-think on the part of the Tories and persuaded them to make key changes in their policy which embraced social security and state planning. Harold Macmillan, already a convert to the idea of a mixed economy, summed up a problem grown crucial in his memoirs: “We had to convince the great post-war electorate that we accepted the need for full employment and even, in times of scarcity, physical control. We had to devise and publicize a position in between the old Liberalism and the new Socialism.”196

Although the Tories struggled at the polls as Labour took credit for the implementation of the welfare state and showed administrative skill in its execution, when finally armed with a new “Conservative Party Manifesto” Churchill managed to reduce the Labour majority in the February 1950 election and was returned to power eighteen months later in October 1951.197

Alongside such tangible political victories, there was a notable revival of Conservative political thought that made an important imprint on the political discourse in Britain for decades to come. A proliferation of publications surfaced in Britain that rejected abstract conceptions of reason and rationality and called instead for a reassertion of the traditional, the moral, the

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emotional and nature in human experience. Quintin Hogg’s *The Case for Conservatism* (1947), for instance, sought to articulate Conservative principles in a way that made them relevant to the challenge posed by the arrival of the mass man. His scepticism about the power of reason echoed that of Edmund Burke, in the sense that both thinkers believed that men, when left to their own devices, were prone to evil, and, as such, were in need of guidance. Hogg quoted a particular passage from Burke because it “breathes the very spirit of Conservatism.” In it, Burke argued that age-old prejudices were cherished,

> Because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted and the more generally they have prevailed the more we cherish them. We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and ages.

Burke’s scepticism of the French Revolutionaries’ belief that man’s reason and will were sufficiently powerful to regenerate human nature through a new and man-made social order was central to the conservative (both small and, in Canada, big ‘C’) narrative on both sides of the Atlantic. Sentiments like these were later echoed in the work of the political thinker, Michael Oakeshott, whose collection, entitled *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (1962), questioned the efficacy of rationalism and fixed ideologies as a precursor of political activity and instead advocated the importance of tradition. Although ideology gave tradition “sharpness of outline and precision,” Oakeshott believed that abstract concepts of political economy could never “take the place of understanding a tradition of political behaviour.” For Oakeshott, “to be conservative,” was thus “to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the

199 This quotation is from Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the French Revolution*, in the 1825-6 edition of the *Collected Works*.
sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the present, present laughter to utopian bliss.”\textsuperscript{201}

As the infrastructure of a revived Conservative narrative was being developed in Britain, a nascent right-wing movement was brewing in the political margins in the United States. George H. Nash painstakingly reconstructed the gradual emergence of conservative thinking from its embattled days following World War II to its more central intellectual position in American life. Although dispersed and divided at the time, conservative political thinkers agreed that “the first task was to articulate truth-in-tradition, however battered and abandoned that tradition might appear.”\textsuperscript{202} They were up against an influential narrative of the American experience which, as we have seen, was articulated in the mid-1950s by Louis Hartz. According to Hartz, “Lockean” liberalism was the only tradition in America; conservatism, which was equated with feudalism and hierarchy, had never been truly indigenous.\textsuperscript{203} For Hartz, conservatism was not an intellectual tradition but a hodgepodge of ideas adopted from Europe that were patently un-American.\textsuperscript{204} In an effort to subvert the Hartzian critique, Nash had to bridge the gap between formulations of conservatism in Europe and Britain with those in the United States and uncover a transatlantic conservative narrative. Shocked by what they viewed as socialist, totalitarian mass man and mass society, Nash showed how a number of American intellectuals turned to Europeans like Burke, Klemens von Metternich, Ortega y Gasset, T.S.

\textsuperscript{201} Oakeshott, \textit{Rationalism in Politics}, 1.
Eliot, and Michael Oakeshott for moral and intellectual instruction. Consequently, the major themes of European conservative thinking—the inadequacy of ideology, scepticism about the power of reason, the organic society, authority, liberty and the rule of law, property, leadership—were brought to bear on the particular challenges faced by Americans in the writings of Russell T. Kirk, William F. Buckley, Jr., and Frank Meyer.

While neo-conservatism did not gain real political ground in the United States until the mid 1960s, the rhetoric of moralism, tradition and individualism shaped Republican rhetoric in the early postwar years. In 1952, Dwight Eisenhower used it with a flourish to rescue the Republicans from the political wilderness to defeat the Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson. Eisenhower’s tendency to choose pragmatism over principle and, in the words of Buckley, his administration’s “easy and wholesale acceptance” of “the great statism of the New Deal” meant that middle of the way conservatism was never really endorsed by intellectuals on the far Right. But what mattered for Eisenhower was not the adherence to rigid ideology but the extent to which he could selectively appropriate new incarnations of conservatism for his own partisan needs. While in power, Eisenhower continued all major New Deal Programs still in operation. He advanced a doctrine of “dynamic conservatism” that prodded voluntary organizations to combat economic and social problems and use the power of the federal government to remedy ills when their resources were insufficient. Yet the focal point of “Ike’s” campaign and image craft was not his continuing support for social security but rather

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the populist message that the Democrats had been in power for too long—for twenty years—and had lost touch with voters. While criss-crossed the country on his “Look Ahead, Neighbour” whistle stop tour, Eisenhower proclaimed that Americans needed a spiritual awakening of national proportions, a revival of the moral vision of America that has been lost after decades of technocratic management, statism and the deplorable infiltration of communists within the federal government.\(^{209}\) At a time in which the promise of self-determination and individualism implicit in the “liberal” democratic faith seemed at odds with the realities of postwar North American life, in which political apathy and “statism” had apparently triumphed, Eisenhower’s emphasis on morality, spirituality, self-reliance, and national revival touched conservative chords that were being heard in Britain and Canada, too.\(^{210}\)

Like its North Atlantic counterparts, finding a way to reconcile the traditional party line with the contingencies of a new postwar world and push its way towards the centre of mainstream political discourse was at the top of the Conservative party’s agenda. The decade following the Second World War was a moment during which English Canadian Tories were forced to confront the possibility of their party’s demise. Remaining morally and politically stable in a stream of constant change required them to adopt the signs, symbols, and metaphors that were historically associated with the party to entirely new political dilemmas. Though frequently imperialist, anti-modernist and elitist in tone, Conservative politicians and political thinkers did not simply seek to recapture some golden age or even distinguish Canadians from other North Americans. They called for the establishment of a moral code of Canadian nationality which would orient national political and cultural life away from the homogenizing


\(^{210}\) For the reaction of British Conservatives to Eisenhower’s victory and a comparative analysis of American and British Conservatism, see Seldon and Ball, *Conservative Century*, pp. 716-717.
influences of technocratic government and towards one which encouraged communal diversity.

For the Conservatives, the flag, the British constitution, and the monarchy were more than merely symbolic of Canada’s imperial past; they were the keys to sustaining a moral political and cultural life and maintaining the balance between spiritual and materialist instincts, the state and the individual. As we have seen, the Conservative position in the immediate postwar decades had historically been forged in the field of battle with Liberalism. Re-polarizing English Canadian politics along ideological lines meant portraying the Tories and their political doctrine as the moral antidote to what was fast becoming viewed as the Liberal party’s bastardized version of liberalism. It was in this way that certain Conservatives hoped to occupy the centre of mainstream of Canadian political discourse, win at the polls and rescue the nation from a corrupt politics of consensus.

One of the key “historic” legacies invoked by English Canadian Conservatives in times of crisis is the discourse of “balance” as embodied in the British constitution. It is indicative that in the midst of the current economic meltdown, the Tory Senator Hugh Segal published a short but pointed piece in the *Globe and Mail* with the title, “balance is a part of Tory history.” In Segal’s eyes, “‘stability and ‘steady as you go’ determined government, with a tilt toward the practical, humane, and visionary, has always typified the Tory brand at its most successful.”

Talk of balance was employed in similar fashion at the famous meeting of Conservative minds in Port Hope, Manitoba in 1942, when fears that “young people” were growing increasingly enchanted by the social reform measures called for by the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation provoked a progressive response. The aim of the conference was to set forth what one prominent Conservative, J.M. Macdonnell, called a “New National Policy”

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with social security as its mainstay. In an article prepared for the Toronto weekly, *Saturday Night*, Macdonnell revealed the new “progressive” bent of the Conservative party. The state, he wrote, had “to see that every citizen is provided with employment at a wage which will enable him to live in decency.” The decision to revive the terminology of Sir John A. Macdonald is telling; it sent a message to the public that the Conservative party could fashion a nation building policy for an new era while at the same time preserve the tried and true Conservative ideals that had been so instrumental to the construction of a prosperous and independent nation. As Gerald Friesen has shown, it also indicates the extent to which such Canadian distillations of social security represent “a local version of the transnational transition” to the Keynesian welfare state. At a time when Canadians were plugged into national and international debates about the benefits of positive government action, it makes sense that Conservatives would alter their policies—and ideological stance—as a response to the consolidation of “Canadian socialist voices” in the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation at both the national and local levels.

Thus, for the “progressive” Conservatives, three days of heated discussion culminated in the “Report of the Round Table on Canadian Policy,” a document which not only reveals the extent to which socialism shaped the party’s new position but also underscores the fusion of these ideas with what were considered to be the central tenets of the Conservative narrative. Juxtaposed with talk of positive state action were definitive statements about the centrality of God, Great Britain, and ancient civil liberties in the Conservative vision for the future. Statements such as “we believe that the individual in his true historical interpretation is essentially a religious being having a personal belief in God as the universal centre of order and

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214 In particular, Friesen focuses on print media as the most important means by which national and international voices were fused together to create a community of home-grown socialists in Canada. See Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2000), 162.
authority” are placed alongside ones that talked about “a partnership in knowledge, in science.” 
Declarations about the Commonwealth being the key to Canadian foreign policy are followed by 
one that called for a partnership with the United States and the endorsement of internationalism, 
interdependence and cooperation among the nations of the world. In one sentence, the Report 
argues that “Canada’s true greatness depends on sympathy and understanding between these two 
original races and all other races that have come to join in the building of our country,” while in 
the next it supports the privileged position of British immigrants, “whose political background, 
intelligence and love of freedom” rendered them fit for life in Canada.215 The goal of the Port 
Hope Conference was to adapt an old and outworn Conservative ideology and its symbols and 
traditions for modern ends. Riddled with contradictions, the Report was typical of its time in 
what we now perceive to be its racist and gender biases. Yet for the same “Port Hopefuls” who 
saw their “progressive” ideas enshrined in a new Conservative party policy, the good society was 
conceived of as one which provided a balance between progress and tradition, spirituality and 
science, positive government action and civil liberties, individualism and community life, 
nationalism and internationalism.

The discourse of balance used by English Canadian Conservatives in the 1940s and 50s 
was also invoked to discuss the constitutional and symbolic role of the monarchy. The idea that 
holding fast to ancient symbols was the best means of ensuring the preservation of liberty and 
democracy as enshrined by the British Constitution central to Conservative thought in the 
postwar period. For such proponents of the Conservative narrative as E. Davie Fulton, Eugene 
Forsey, John Farthing, and W.L. Morton, the monarchical tradition functioned as a source of 
restraint in a mass society. The separation of powers between the monarchy, lords, and commons 
provided a moral anchor in what they increasingly viewed as unwieldy oceans of change. To

Fulton, “the genius of our form of constitution” was that it combined “in one formula, a crown with little practical but immense moral authority; an executive with unlimited theoretical powers to exercise in the name of that crown but severe practical limitations of its responsibility to Parliament; and a Parliament which, apart from the executive and of itself can initiate practically nothing, but because it is the King’s parliament and the people’s representatives combined can hold the executive completely bound to it.” “Do away with King and Crown,” Fulton argued, “and this [balanced] structure ceases to exist.” It is in this context Conservatives called for “loyalty to the crown as essential to the preservation of Canadian democracy.”

The emphasis that some English Canadian Tories placed on the mixed constitution and monarchy at mid-century is indicative of more than their sentimental royalism. For a party that was purportedly concerned about the heterogeneity inherent in mass society and “liberal” democracy, the mixed constitution ensured that no one power—the executive, cabinet, or majority in parliament—could be exercised in excess. For instance, the historian, W.L. Morton viewed the idea of Confederation as based on “a set of constitutional principles rooted in Canadian history and the practice of government.” Like Fulton, Morton believed that at the time of Confederation the monarchical idea was understood to involve a balanced social order, a traditional authority, and above all a rejection of republicanism, or popular sovereignty of the American type. Seen from this angle, the rejection of popular sovereignty meant the repudiation of majoritarian democracy. To Morton, Confederation was the creation of a political

nationality, not a nation state. Sectionalism and communal diversities were not obliterated by union; they were incorporated into it and subtly transformed such institutions as the cabinet. The focus of political loyalty lay with the monarchy, not with the state as the expression of the general will. Consequently, Canadian nationality did not demand conformity, as did the American—only allegiance:

The moral code of Canadian nationality is found in the fact that Canada is a monarchy and in the nature of monarchical allegiance. As an American is united at bottom by a covenant, Canada is united at the top by allegiance. Because Canada is a nation founded on allegiance and not on compact, there is no process of becoming Canadian akin to conversion, there is no pressure for uniformity.\(^{219}\)

The Tories viewed monarchical institutions as being indispensible to a pluralist society and pluralism and diversity were the source of genuine freedom.\(^{220}\)

The importance of traditional signs and symbols to the fashioning of postwar Conservatism is also evident in debates carried on in parliament in the decade immediately following the Second World War over finding a distinct Canadian flag. Two little-known flag debates occurred as preludes to the epic struggle that would later take place between John G. Diefenbaker and Lester B. Pearson in 1964-5. In both cases, Liberal Members of Parliament attempted to pass legislation that called for a distinct Canadian flag. The King government’s initiative to adopt a “distinctive” Canadian flag in 1946 was conceived alongside two additional new laws. The first sought to create a separate Canadian citizenship to complement the status of British subject that Canadians retained as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The second was a private members bill which aimed to rename “Dominion Day” “Canada Day.” In the end, only the citizenship bill became law.\(^{221}\) The report of the flag committee was abandoned and the bill renaming Dominion Day was buried in the Senate. In December 1953


\(^{220}\) This idea is articulated by Davie Fulton in a speech on “What it Means to Be Conservative” delivered at the Stanfield Dinner in 1955. See E. Davie Fulton Fonds, LAC: MG 32/B11/6.

\(^{221}\) Martin, “Citizenship and the People’s World,” 656. Martin reports that on two occasions he “pitched” his idea of citizenship to Mackenzie King by describing it as a way to “help complete Laurier’s vision of a separate Canadian nation.”
and January 1954, the matter of adopting a national flag was raised again by Liberal MPs through another private member’s bill in the hopes of recognizing Canada’s status as a fully autonomous nation.\textsuperscript{222} After much raucous debate in the press and in Parliament, the second bill suffered the same fate as the first.

The Conservatives engaged in these first flag debates—those who wrote editorials, books, and pamphlets, and delivered sermons on the subject—believed that the British Canadian identity was being attacked by the stealth and subtlety of their Liberal opponents.\textsuperscript{223} Under the umbrella of British Canadian identity were a number of institutions and ideas which they believed represented core national values—parliamentary democracy, the mixed constitution, the Commonwealth, law and order, and religion. To them, the Union Jack and the Red Ensign were the symbols that incorporated them all.

The contents of Gordon Churchill’s private papers reveal the types of sources from which Conservatives were drawing their battle stories. Pamphlets containing a number of sermons written by on the subject of the Union Jack and the Red Ensign reveal the extent to which the clergy of the larger Christian denominations still enjoyed high status and considerable influence in public life.\textsuperscript{224} One sermon delivered by the Rev. Gordon C. Smyth on the Toronto radio station CKEY on February 7, 1954, traces the Union Jack back to the days when “it was a crusader’s emblem, the Cross of St. George, England’s patron saint, became the banner of that kingdom. Centuries later, Scotland and England were united under the Stuarts. Thus the flag of St. Andrew, Scotland’s patron saint was linked with the standard of St. George and as a result a flag with two Crosses came to represent the United Kingdom.” Finally, “the cross of Ireland’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{223} Consider such speeches as the one delivered by E. Davie Fulton at the Robert Stanfield Dinner in 1955. In the speech, he argues that the Liberals endeavored to “whittle away by stealth and subtlety, of those forms [symbols and traditions] which are the outward manifestation of the substance, and without which the substance would soon vanish.” E. Davie Fulton Papers: LAC, MG 32/B11/6.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Hugh McLeod, \textit{The Religious Crisis of the 1960s} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 31-32.
\end{footnotes}
patron saint, St. Patrick, was added.” In this way, the Union Jack never belonged to a single country but rather “stood for the ‘united nations.’” When the Union Jack “went abroad” with the expansion of the British Empire, it became the banner of “humanity”:

The Jack is the symbol of Napoleon’s tyranny overcome, and the might of Hitler hurled back. The Jack speaks of Wesley and Livingston. The Jack reminds us of explorers and reformers crossing the oceans of the world to bring Christian civilization, British justice and liberties to far-flung areas of the earth. Under the Union Jack, French Canada received its Magna Carta in the Quebec Act, and Canada was well fed, clothed, trained, until their country came of age with the Statute of Westminster.225

Seen from this angle, the “Jack” represented the plurality of nations that were members of the Empire—all of which enjoyed the benefits of British liberty and justice. The crossing of oceans, subduing of peoples and establishment of colonies in other lands—and other such naked acts of violence—were woven, layer upon layer, into a story about Canada’s British heritage that touched all elements of society because it affected right, religion, relationships of gender, economy, taxation, beliefs, education, and the study of languages and juridical institutions.

“Such history,” as Michel Foucault suggests, “that takes as its starting point the fact of war itself and makes its analysis in terms of war can relate to all these things—war, religion, politics, manners, and characters—and can therefore act as a principle that allows us to understand history.”226 It is in this way that the relationship of force becomes a political technique. And so the same story of beauty, tradition, history, and heroic association is echoed in the editorials, speeches, and books written by Conservative political thinkers.227

Davie Fulton summed up the argument neatly in his introduction to John Farthing’s Freedom Wears a Crown:

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226 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, pp. 162-63.
The adventure told and lived here is the adventure of the mind and spirit: the courage to believe in something bigger than mere geographical bigness, something better than mere physical satisfaction, and to hold that Canada will not be in fact a nation with any meaning unless these physical phenomenon serve not as justifications in themselves but as attributes consciously dedicated to the establishment and preservation of a basic political ideal.  

However much purveyors of Conservatism like Fulton, Churchill, and Morton viewed themselves as being diametrically opposed to the Liberals’ “Parliament without parliamentary liberty,” it is telling that their “ideological” loyalties did not preclude them from appropriating bits of Whig narrative to suit their purposes. They envisioned the old nineteenth century philosophy of the extinct Liberal as having found its true dwelling place in Conservative minds. They believed that the Liberal party no longer concerned itself with individual freedom, Parliamentary democracy, and reform. As they engaged the Liberal government in a series of political battles throughout the 1950s, it was precisely their selective appropriation from conservatism, liberalism, and socialism which enabled the reboot of Party principles and rhetoric. In this, as we have seen, Canadian Conservatives were not exceptional; rather, their politics and rhetoric reflect the cumulative effects of their existence in a transatlantic universe of marginal “ideological” differences. What mattered was not waging a revolution against the government party’s political programme, per se, but rather abstracting their “new” programme into well-worn signs, metaphors, and images which, when invoked in public, would like a seed contain the age-old partisan fight. They perceived that what the public wanted was the image of political upheaval, not political upheaval itself.

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That partisan battles are really representations of moral situations played out in public and amplified in the struggle for political rule can be seen in the ruckus generated by the Tories over the Defence Production Bill in 1955-1956. The St. Laurent government’s attempt to pass a bill which would extend the powers of C.D. Howe, the Minister of Defence Production, into the indefinite future called into question the Liberal narrative of responsible governance and its monopoly on power. As Howard Green, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Vancouver, noted, it was a moment in which even “the Liberals [began to feel] uneasy about the extended powers.”

Four years earlier, in response to the Korean War, Parliament had given Howe the same massive powers to intervene in the economy as had been used during the Second World War. In particular, Howe could require private firms to make what the government wanted at prices fixed by the government. Yet he had been given these exceptional powers because of the wartime emergency and in peacetime they were not supposed to be renewed. Unfortunately, Howe not only had a reputation for being a bad parliamentarian—he was one. As the journalist Doug Fisher recalled, “Howe hated Parliament, hated explaining his policies and making his case. And so he attempted to make his powers as Minister of Defence Production permanent and Mr. St. Laurent and the Cabinet agreed.”

But the Conservative opposition dug in, forcibly arguing against the bill and the debate went on and on in Parliament. Prominent Tories such as George Drew, Donald Fleming, and John Diefenbaker stood up, one after the other, proclaiming that there was an “inexhaustible appetite on the part of this Government for unnecessary powers.” St. Laurent’s colleagues

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234 Interview with Doug Fisher, 10 Dec. 2006; see also, Robert Bothwell’s Interview with Bill Bennett, 14 August, 1975: U of T Archives: B1979-005/002.
wrote letters attempting to convince him to withdraw the bill because it was wrong in both principle and in practice. Howe went on holiday and St. Laurent telephoned the Leader of the Opposition, George Drew, to discuss amendments to the bill that would satisfy the Conservatives. And so a limit of four years was placed on Howe’s powers.  

The private papers of sympathetic Liberals indicate the extent to which the Defence Production debacle depleted party morale. They are peppered with references about how there was “a more critical attitude to the Government today than there has been up to this point.” “I hear this from people who have always voted Liberal,” Senator Crerar complained to the journalist Grant Dexter. Crerar added at the end of the letter that such people would “of course, vote Liberal again,” but the seeds of doubt had already been sewn. Perhaps worst of all, the Liberals had allowed the Conservatives to occupy the higher, moral ground. According Tom Kent “it was the Conservative message—the picture of an arrogant old tyrant seeking to entrench himself permanently—that got through to the public.” “The opposition, having tasted blood,” he recalled, “was spoiling for more.”  

The debate over the Defence Production Bill was soon advertised as the very first public outing of what Conservatives touted as “Liberal arrogance” in the 1950s. Perhaps more than any other, however, the debate over the trans-Canada pipeline of 1956 revealed the extent to which the Conservative party had found a way to take its narrative and apply it, selectively, to real political circumstances. The debate book-ended over twenty years of Tory guerrilla style warfare against the Liberal juggernaut and marked the point at which the Conservatives eked out their own bit of territory in mainstream political discourse.

237 Also look to the popular press—i.e. Alex Young, “Howe Load on Liberals: Cabinet Strong Man Loser in Party Fight,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 20 September 1955.
238 T.A. Crerar to Grant Dexter, 14 December 1955. Grant Dexter Fonds: Collection 2142; Box 7; Folder 45
It all started after the Second World War, when Canada’s booming economy needed more energy. As Robert Bothwell has shown, while those in the know at the National Research Council and the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply, C.D. Howe, understood that atomic power was feasible, the prototype of the CANDU (Canadian Deuterium-Uranium) nuclear reactor was still in the early stages of development. The Liberal government responded by formulating a bill that called for the construction of a trans-Canadian pipeline which would bring Alberta’s gas straight to the major Canadian markets in southern Ontario. Unlike Defence Production, the pipeline issue was put forward after a rational process of negotiation and due political consideration. To Howe it was the greatest nation-building project since the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Conservative Ontario Premier, Leslie Frost, and Howe agreed that the northern Ontario portions of the pipeline would initially be owned by a Crown corporation, with Ontario contributing part of the capital. It would then be leased to the Trans-Canada Pipelines Company and, when the whole operation was earning enough revenue, would be bought from the government at cost plus interest. Towards the end of April, however, the rest of the story emerged. The Trans-Canada Pipelines could not raise the revenue to build the Prairie section of the line in 1956—it needed a government loan for 90 per cent of the cost.

The Liberal cabinet imposed a deadline of early June for the passage of the legislation and to make this possible Howe would have to press for closure—the parliamentary procedure that stops debate at regular intervals through the various states of Parliament’s consideration of a Bill—as soon as the legislation was introduced. In so doing, the Liberals naively handed the opposition parties a chance to regurgitate, in front of a mass audience, every line of criticism which they had up to that point aired among a small circle of politicians and intellectuals.

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According to Doug Fisher, the C.C.F. candidate who would soon defeat Howe in his own riding, observed at the time, the tactic of immediate closure made the role of Parliament the primary issue of the pipeline bill, and not the pipeline itself.243

The arguments put forth by the opposition benches against the Liberal government were twofold: first, they argued against using tax-payers’ money to provide a loan of over $80,000,000 to an American oil company that wanted to build the pipeline. At a time when uneasiness about the extent to which the Canadian economy was coming to be dominated by American corporations—a nerve that was rubbed further by the preliminary release of the Royal Commission on Canada’s Economic Prospects which questioned the government’s policy of allowing control of Canada’s natural resources and other business enterprises to be sold to foreign interests, particularly Americans—such claims turned a lot of heads.244 As much as it spoke to the anxieties of the times, however, the argument that Liberals actively encouraged continental integration—both economic and political—and cared little about national sovereignty or the “spirit” of the nation itself was not exactly new; it was a line of reasoning that can be traced back to Macdonald and to Disraeli before him that pitted nation and empire-building Tories against radical Liberal internationalists.

The second charge levied against the Liberals was that, by introducing closure, preventing questions, stifling debate, and removing the need for explanation, Howe and his supporters sought to undermine the institution of Parliament itself. Judith Robinson, one of a number of Conservative-leaning journalists who had publicly supported the party since the 1940s, called the Liberal government out on its hypocrisy in the following terms:

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These are they who used to boast that their political ancestry ran in unbroken line from Pym and Hampden, Henri Quatre and Coligny through the Elder Pitt and Charles James Fox on the one hand and Lafayette on the other. These are they whose fathers were wont to quote Junius and the Areopagitica and Tom Payne as their sacred books and to tell their children stories of heroes of Liberalism who risked all for freedom. They are the same who now pour freedom down the pipeline because a power-hungry ancient tells them they have to.245

Robinson summoned the ghosts of great Huguenot leaders and famous Whigs who had fought and risked their lives standing up to aspiring tyrants in an effort to show how C.D. Howe and his followers had forswn their “Liberal” credentials in order to become little Caesars. In his memoirs, John Diefenbaker uses similar language to express the sense of triumph embodied in this singular Parliamentary moment. “There were valiant fighters in the Opposition: Drew, Fleming, Fulton, Green, M.J. Coldwell from the CCF, and others,” Diefenbaker recounted. “They stood. Coldwell was a person who normally gave an appearance of detachment. He became more and more furious as the debate went on. We saw re-enacted what had happened in the Long Parliament during the reign of Charles I when Coldwell rushed up to the Clerk’s desk saying, “You can’t do this.” And he grabbed the Mace, the symbol of the House of Commons’ authority to sit. I thought he would carry it away.” For Diefenbaker, this was “Parliament at its worst and Parliament in its greatest hour—that is what we saw.” The untouchable C.D. Howe and other ministers “derided the Opposition. The juggernaut rolled on. Donald Fleming walked by, I said, “Farewell, John Hampden.”246

Political historians who examine the inflamed political rhetoric of the opposition at face value tend to boil the arguments of the Conservatives during the debate over the trans-Canada pipeline down to simply “righteous wrath” and judge it as being “irrelevant and without

245 Judith Robinson, This is on the House (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1957), 140. For more on other journalists who publicly criticized the Liberals and supported the Tories in the decades immediately following the Second World War, many of whom occupied offices at the Toronto Telegram, The Ottawa Journal, the Montreal Gazette, The Winnipeg Tribune, and the Fredericton Gleaner, see Peter Stursberg’s Interview with Grattan O’Leary, 7 February 1973: LAC MG 31/D 78/Vol. 15.
246 Debates, 1956, 1, 4, 6 June, 4537-775; Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs, Vol. 1, 246. For the Liberal point-of-view, see Pickersgill, St. Laurent, pp. 292-93.
It is well known that many Tories, Diefenbaker included, actually saw the value of building the pipeline and knew their constituents supported the endeavour. The drama that ensued points to the Tories’ recognition that an opportunity to undercut the Liberal government by establishing a historical and ideological continuum between “Black Friday” and glorious revolutions of centuries past was at hand. They made this connection not for the purpose of analyzing or interpreting the proposed legislation or as a judgement on Howe’s nation-building logic. Their rhetoric was consciously designed instead for tactical deployment within the wider partisan war. John Hampden is viewed as the central figure of the English Revolution. He was the man who challenged King Charles I’s authority, engaged in a civil war against his forces, and executed the tyrant in 1649. Diefenbaker knew it as a moment when a King who asserted his monarchical power was struck down and the supremacy of parliament was established.

In the end, Diefenbaker played only a minor role in the famous Pipeline Debate. In actuality “Black Friday” was the shining hour of his predecessor, George Drew. But when Drew resigned his office due to illness and Diefenbaker took up the position of party leader, he claimed the story of the trans-Canada pipeline for his own. He grasped the mantle of John Hampden and took up his populist and revolutionary narrative. During the general election of 1957, Progressive Conservative Party National Headquarters printed a pamphlet with huge block letters which said: “Black Friday: It’s Time for a Diefenbaker Government.” On the cover is a

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248 That Diefenbaker actually supported the building of the pipe-line itself probably explains his relative silence during the debate. See Bothwell, Drummond, and English, Canada Since 1945, 145; Smith, Rogue Tory, 202.

249 “Power and resistance confront each other, and use multiple mobile, and changing tactics, in a field of relations of force whose logic is not so much the regulated and codified logic of right and sovereignty, as the strategic warlike logic of struggle.” See Foucault, Society Must be Defended, 280.


251 Camp, Gentlemen, Players, and Politicians, 201.
cartoon drawn by Reidford of the Toronto *Globe and Mail* on 16 May 1956. The image depicts the Peace Tower doubling as a guillotine and next to it is a quote taken from the *Vancouver Sun* on 16 August 1956: “Black Friday needs to be remembered... If it is allowed to fade out of memory it may become something worse: a turning point in the course of the country’s history: the point at which the decay of Canadian democracy began.” Here was a story of moral decay, a lament for democracy lost at the hands of a dictatorial Liberal government that Diefenbaker could use. In these words were the hidden roots of a spectacle which enacted political battles and a list of heroes that a consummate performer like him could easily emulate.

Although Diefenbaker’s contributions to the re-fashioning of Conservative party principles in these early come-back years were marginal at best, he fast became their poster boy. As Newman remarked nearly 10 years later, it was the “always unpredictable alchemy of democratic politics” that enabled a small-town lawyer prairie lawyer to appropriate the revitalized Tory narrative and give the people a “leadership cult.” Diefenbaker was fortuitous in that his arrival on the national political scene coincided with the revival of the Conservative narrative. Keen political instincts drew him naturally towards a revised version of Toryism which appealed to British tradition and sought to modernize its application. By the time Drew resigned, the Conservative narrative had already been rendered as a mythologized “populist” revision of the British radical nation-building hero. But it was not until Diefenbaker assumed the party leadership that he actively took up the mantle of Tory nation-builder and embraced the narrative and the spectacle.

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3—Selling the Drama: Diefenbaker and the Politics of Persuasion

John Diefenbaker’s electoral triumphs of 1957 and 1958 have often been attributed to his mystical powers of persuasion or to a temporary fit of national psychosis. In his tell-all book on Diefenbaker’s rise and fall, Peter C. Newman claimed that like Jesus Christ and Hitler, Diefenbaker possessed a certain “charisma” which enabled him to whip the country into a fit of hysteria that was decidedly anti-establishment and un-Canadian.254 Dalton Camp, one of Canada’s earliest and most gifted public relations experts, admitted that when Diefenbaker was in top form he was “like a magician,” who, with the “sudden inflection of his voice” could “cast a spell… over the crowd, over the press, and over me.”255 At bottom, Bruce Hutchison said that Diefenbaker’s “flaming amalgam of outraged virtue, downtrodden justice…and unconquerable Canadian spirit” was an act to convince the nation to put him in charge. For Hutchison, the “messianic prophet” from Saskatchewan “could have played Hamlet or Touchstone, Macbeth or Lady Macbeth,” but in the end, “he was rehearsing for a larger role. He was learning to play Diefenbaker.”256

Few attempts have been made by scholars to account for the mechanisms by which Diefenbaker became Canada’s first political superstar. Some of them view his tenure in office as an interlude during which time Canada’s natural governing party could reassess its policies and rebuild its organization to meet the demands of the new postwar era.257 Others tend to see in Diefenbaker’s achievements only the root causes of his failures. They talk about the deep divisions within the Progressive Conservative party that Diefenbaker’s failed leadership only worsened and focus on his personality as if it was the only determining force that affected his

255 Dalton Camp, Gentlemen, Players, and Politicians (Toronto: Deneau and Greenberg, 1970), 321
256 Bruce Hutchison, To Canada With Love and Some Misgivings (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991), 55.
257 For more on Diefenbaker’s tenure in office as an “interlude” between successive Liberal governments, see Peter Regenstreif, The Diefenbaker Interlude: Parties and Voting in Canada, an Interpretation (Toronto: Longmans, 1965); Reginald Whitaker, The Government Party Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-58 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), xi;
political fortunes. But as Bruce Hutchison argued, there is another side to Diefenbaker and his political persona that conventional political analyses cannot explain—there is the image, the spectacle, and the storyteller.

The political analyst, John Duffy, has done more than any scholar to account for the “mass phenomenon” of John Diefenbaker. Duffy argues that the elections of 1957 and 1958 “make up a single fight that marked the eclipse of the political system that had prevailed for thirty years and the birth of the modern in Canadian politics.” He focuses on the new and vital bond that Diefenbaker struck between the politicians and the new, fickle swing voter of the postwar era. At a time when older systems of patronage had eroded in Canada and were replaced by an expansive and powerful civil service, Duffy believes that the politics of personality emerged to fill the void and give uncertain voters an image and an idea to which they could affix their loyalties. “Elvis and the Beatles drew on it and so would politicians like Jack Kennedy, but Diefenbaker,” he argues, “was the first one in.”

Yet as close as Duffy comes to understanding how Diefenbaker became the mythical “Oz” whose powers of persuasion baffled so many of his contemporaries, he only vaguely refers to the increasing importance of television as a source of information of postwar Canadians and the new techniques of public relations that made the mass phenomenon possible.

In the late 1950s, the new technology of television and the attendant apparatuses of public relations encouraged the fashioning of a new kind of politics and a new breed of

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260 Ibid., 197. Peter Regenstreif also suggests that the focus on leadership during the Diefenbaker campaign was at least in part a consequence of “the growing absence of loyalties based on social ties.” According to his calculations, “Diefenbaker shook the electorate loose from its traditional moorings.” This new cult of leadership coupled with shifting demographics “combined to unsettle the country.” See Regenstreif, The Diefenbaker Interlude: Parties and Voting in Canada (Toronto: Longman’s 1965) pp. 24, 42, 171.
politician. Gerald Friesen has shown how innovations in communication technology have historically changed the responses of ordinary citizens to politics. “A viable, politically involved community,” according to Friesen, “requires communications vehicles, and when the dominant communication technology changes it must adapt to the new media if it is to remain a viable community.”

In much the same way, traditional political parties must respond and adapt to widespread social, economic, and cultural change in order to remain relevant. Viewed from this angle, the failure of the Liberals to reorganize the party and adapt new modes of political struggle in the decade following the Second World War can thus be viewed as a key contributing factor to their sudden defeat in 1957. John Diefenbaker’s Progressive Conservative party stands in stark contrast as an organization which was successfully reorganized to encourage the development of a symbiotic relationship between modern public relations techniques, new communications technology, and policymaking. The combination allowed Diefenbaker to effectively occupy the centre of mainstream political discourse and helped render his “New National Policy” into a winning campaign strategy.

Diefenbaker’s was a politics of celebrity made possible by consumption-driven individual experience and a shift in communication systems. In this new era of “screen capitalism,” celebrity became a mode of communication in which the biographies of movie stars, television and radio personalities were known intimately to people across time and space. So Diefenbaker became a political superstar and a receptacle of voters’ national dreams. Canada

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263 Friesen suggests that the common peoples’ perceptions of time and space in what is now Canada changed with innovations in the dominant means of communication. He examines how in the age of “screen capitalism” combined with the expansion of the middle class and mass culture changed the ways that the state interacted with citizens, and vice versa. Diefenbaker’s politics—his oratorical skill and his understanding of modern public relations—was a hybrid of the eras of print and screen capitalism. See *Citizens and Nation*, especially the introduction, pp. 3-7, 212.
was fast becoming a prosperous nation in which local economies were being swallowed up by larger production systems. Labour was more mobile, and continuous innovation was the rule. Citizens were hungry for a shared national vocabulary. So Diefenbaker and his advisors fashioned a pan-Canadian narrative couched in easy-to-understand black and white terms for a national television audience that had grown accustomed to getting its fill of images and ideas in a particular dramatic form.\textsuperscript{264} After over twenty years of rule by the same government, Canadians were beginning to question whether political elections were still a valid indicator of their choices. So Diefenbaker forged a story of Canada designed to make ordinary citizens feel that they could play an active part in building the nation. His “New National Policy” was couched in terms of a therapeutic ethos designed for the purpose of assuaging voters worried about mass consumption, continentalism, communism, and the end of empire.\textsuperscript{265} At the same time, it was designed to appeal to the young with its promises of risk, adventure, and the conquering of new frontiers.\textsuperscript{266}

Diefenbaker’s mystical powers of persuasion can be boiled down to a savvy understanding of the ways in which new communications technology and advertising could tap into the national consciousness and effectively respond to its needs and desires. Quite beyond the political implications of Diefenbaker’s promises was a vision of national renewal and salvation that was both timely and relevant. And beyond that, there was a vague but powerful assurance that every Canadian had a part to play in the process. As we have seen, Diefenbaker’s political persona and his pan-Canadian narrative were fashioned as form of resistance that confronted

\textsuperscript{264} On the transformation of politics into a televised, spectator sport, see Paul Rutherford, \textit{When Television was Young: Primetime Canada, 1952-1967} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), Ch. 10, in particular.


\textsuperscript{266} Chris Dummitt explores how the idea of the manly modern came into prominence during the immediate postwar period in \textit{The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).
Liberal power. His “vision” was based not so much on the logic of right and sovereignty but rather the more strategic and warlike logic of partisan struggle. His was a potent partisan narrative made powerful because it was shaped by new techniques and weapons of mass persuasion that were increasingly pervasive in North America but which his adversaries failed to fully employ.

Diefenbaker’s successful bid for power can therefore not be understood apart from the strategic failures of the Liberal party. There are many other well documented factors that contributed to the sudden demise of the Liberal party in 1957. To defeats over Howe’s ill-advised Defence Production Bill and the trans-Canada pipeline are added the divisiveness caused by the Suez Canal crisis, an unpopular and tight-fisted budget tabled in early 1957 by the Liberal Minister of Finance, Walter Harris, and a generally pervasive arrogance that afflicted the top ranks of the executive branch of government that did not believe it needed to try in order to win. Although an acute crisis in the management of the party’s public relations has also made the list, it tends to only be referred to briefly as the consequence of the party’s implosion from within rather than its failure to respond to broader changes going on in Canadian culture.

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267 On the power relations that form the base of culturally constructed political institutions—the relationship of power, politics, and war—see Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76* (New York: Picador, 2003), esp. Lectures 18 February 1976, pp. 155-165.


269 For example, in his analysis of the organizing and financing of the Liberal party, Reginald Whitaker argues that its collapse in the mid-1950s was due to its top-heavy approach and failure to reach grassroots supporters. He refers only in passing to Diefenbaker’s political acumen. See *The Government Party*, pp. i-xiv. This was also the opinion of Peter Regenstreif in his examination of Canadians’ voting behaviour from 1957-63, see *The Diefenbaker Interlude*, pp. 29, 41.
The reactions of the Liberal rank-and-file to the outcome of the election suggest that they were aware of the wide gulf that had grown between the government and the electorate. The results of a questionnaire distributed by National Headquarters on 22 November 1957, which a number of MPs completed, reveal their anger at the failure of the party to find new and innovative ways to engage with the public. One commentator noted glibly that “Governments in power over a long period of years tend to lose touch with the voter. Cabinet ministers become little dictators… the civil service become the actual advisors of the Cabinet… the trend of public thought and action is only a cry in the wilderness.” More than a dozen disenchanted Members dealt directly with the double problem of public relations and television: “In our public relations we failed badly. The people not only must be served well but they must be made to feel that they are being served well. Our failure proves that politics is still an art and not a business.” Another lamented the fact that “television was the coming publicity outlet but the party refused to take it seriously.” “There were no pat slogans,” another said, “like ‘King or Chaos’ or ‘I like Ike.’”

To Dick O’Hagan, a young Liberal who would eventually manage Lester Pearson’s public relations in the 1960s, it was ironic that the party lost the election by failing to play its own game. After all, it was the Liberals who first understood that discovering what undecided voters were thinking was the best way to attract their votes. In the mid 1930s the party hired Cockfield Brown, a pioneer among Canadian ad agencies, and reaped the benefits of its research department and staff of psychologists and social scientists. Cockfield Brown took its cues from ad agencies in the United States, which since the early twentieth century had become an integral part of a consumption-oriented society dominated by bureaucratic corporations. Ad

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270 LAC MG 28/IV/3/843.
agencies were organized in accordance with the new “science” of behaviourism which had been deployed by governments during the First World War as a means of attaining public support. “Here was an extraordinary accomplishment,” remarked Eddie Bernays, who is generally considered to be one of the founding father of public relations: “mass enthusiasm at the prospect of a global brawl that otherwise would mystify those very masses, and that shattered most of those who actually took part in it. The Anglo-American drive to demonize ‘the Hun’ and to cast the war as a transcendent clash between Atlantic ‘civilization’ and Prussian ‘barbarism,’ made so powerful an impression on so many that the worlds of governments and business forever changed.”

The use of propaganda not only roused populations into “fanatical assent” for the war but also created a national propaganda and media apparatus that never existed before. The impact of the new technology of advertising on democratic government was explored in the early 1920s by the American journalist, Walter Lippmann. Influenced by Freud and other kinds of social psychology, Lippmann took issue with the idea that an informed public was capable of understanding the world and taking political actions or making decisions on the basis of that understanding. In contrast to the Enlightenment ideal that rational critical discourse shapes social norms and institutions and underpins all aspects of social and political life, Lippmann proposed that people experienced the world through symbols, metaphors and images that made up what he called “pseudo environments.” He argued that people’s universes and ideas about the world were filtered through pre-conceived ideas and stereotypes and that their perceptions were organized around narratives and symbols. Such narratives were metaphorical and suggestive rather than logical and analytical; designed to disarm critical analysis, they appealed

273 Ira Basen’s Interview with Stuart Ewen; See also Stuart Ewen, PR!: A Social History of Spin (Toronto: Basic Books, 1996), pp. 166-169.
275 Ibid., 11.
to the structures and traditions of storytelling and the clichés of historical memory. In the context of partisan narratives, generating voter support and even governing effectively required the control and manufacturing of images, the creation of “pseudo environments,” and the effective fashioning of tribal stereotypes in order to convince the public to perceive the world in ways that were consistent with the party line and the kinds of actions that it wanted to take.

Lippmann commented on the potential of public relations in American politics in the first half of the twentieth century, but it would not be until after the Second World War that his ideas would become relevant to Canadian politics. Canada lagged behind the U.S. in terms of urbanization and industrialization. Advertising and the social sciences were also slower to develop north of the border. After 1945, however, increased prosperity and a burgeoning middle class became the engine not only driving the new economy but also enabling the proliferation of advertising and public relations firms north of the border. The transformation of Canadian political parities into centralized and effective “pseudo environment” making machines did not happen overnight. Public relations firms like Cockfield Brown started out on the periphery of politics, but it was only a matter of time before they would become indispensable to the waging of partisan struggles.

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277 Richard Slotkin employs the genre of the Frontier in American culture to make a similar point. See Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, p. 6.
280 During the Second World War, Cockfield Brown was employed by both the War Information Board and the Liberal party. In its capacity as an employee of the W.I.B., the agency was charged with the responsibility of both selling the war to Canadians and determining how what Canadians wanted from their government in the post-war world. As Ira Basen has noted, the results of the publicly funded polling data helped shape Liberal policies and determined the content of their national ad campaigns for well over a decade to come. See Ira Basen, “Cockfield Brown: the original ‘Liberal friendly’ ad agency,” *CBC News Online*, 25 February 2005. For more on the affects of
During the federal election of 1945 Cockfield Brown officially put an experienced ad
man, H.E. [Bob] Kidd, on loan to the Liberals. In addition to supervising the party’s advertising
and polling, he was given the title of “National Secretary” and became the party’s official
national campaign organizer. The agency paid Kidd’s salary during the campaign and was later
compensated for its losses with scores of government contracts.\textsuperscript{281} Reginald Whitaker contends
that Kidd’s appointment at National Headquarters “signalled the growth of advertising and
public relations in politics to the point where those skilled in the techniques of mass selling were
gradually becoming more important than old-fashioned politicians or organizers.”\textsuperscript{282} Yet as
integral as Kidd’s work was to the party in terms of building up and perpetuating the image of
calm rationalism and good management, there is much evidence to suggest that the powerful
Liberal cabinet and its advisors did not fully comprehend the importance of public relations to
both their individual and corporate political success.

Despite Kidd’s presence at National Headquarters as the lead campaign manager and
public relations expert, the Liberal narrative, its style, substance, and the means by which it was
being told and sold to the public was formulated primarily by politicians and civil servants. The
National Headquarters of the Liberal Party preformed the symbolic role of legitimatizing cabinet
rule within the Liberal party and was not an active force in its own right. As Whitaker notes, it
was a “mere facade intended to maintain the fiction that there was a Liberal party ‘out there.’”\textsuperscript{283}
The rigid top-down structure of the federal Liberal organization had by then completely severed
the lines of communication between the elite and the grassroots of the party. And as we have

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\textsuperscript{281} Interview with Dick O’Hagan, 19 June 2006.
\textsuperscript{282} Whitaker, \textit{The Government Party}, 186.
\textsuperscript{283} Whitaker, \textit{The Government Party}, 185. See also Camp, \textit{Gentlemen, Players and Politicians}, pp. 11, 30; Robert
\end{flushright}
seen in the previous chapter, there were few men in positions of power that seemed to care.\textsuperscript{284} As Dalton Camp, who would soon become one of the Progressive Conservative party’s public relations experts, observed of the Liberal predicament at the time: “[w]hen men in power lose their touch, their facility in determining the political climate, the tragedy is always that they are the last to know it is gone. For a while their power and reputation will sustain them, or the gift of their opponents folly may rescue them, but when decay of judgment sets in, it permeates the bones of the public man and he has not long to last.”\textsuperscript{285}

On the surface there appeared to be little the Liberals had to worry about. Public opinion polls published in the spring of 1957 indicated that the attitudes of individual voters towards the federal parties had remained fairly constant. Among men and women, the belief that the Liberal party was the one under which they and their families would be better off had increased slightly since 1953. Gallup polls reported that the Liberals had the support of 47 per cent of the electorate, followed by the Progressive Conservatives at 32 per cent, with the third tier parties making up the difference.\textsuperscript{286}

Despite the encouraging news, Kidd was concerned that the approaching federal election would not be won as easily as others had in the past. In a memorandum written to D.R. McRobie at the Montreal offices of Cockfield Brown, he speculated that “the 1957 election may be cast in an entirely different key from those of other years. I may be wrong, but it’s my impression that the electorate is in a different mood now than it has been in other years.” In 1935, the slogan “King or Chaos” appealed to a majority of voters who, after years of depression and war, were “uneasy about the future of Canada.” “In 1949,” he recalled, “we had a new star, Mr. St. Laurent,\textsuperscript{286}

\textsuperscript{284} Interview with Tom Kent, 22 February 2007; See also Tom Kent, \textit{A Public Purpose}, especially Part I: “Getting Defeated,” pp. 3-44.
\textsuperscript{285} Camp, \textit{Gentlemen, Players, and Politicians}, 50.
\textsuperscript{286} Apparently 74 per cent of Canadians also considered that St. Laurent was “doing a good job.” Memorandum—National Liberal Federation of Canada—the Latest Gallup Polls, 30 April 1957. Source: Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, 30 April 1957: LAC MG 28/IV/3/836.
and we concentrated on him and on the success of the post-war program.” In 1953, the Liberals could rely on the success of their policies of reconstruction and reaped the benefit of a weak opposition and an ineffective leader whose gaffes provided easy cannon fodder for critics.  

However, as he surveyed the scene in the fall of 1956 Kidd could see that the Tories were effectively building on the momentum created by provincial victories in Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. And at the national convention scheduled for later that year, they would choose a new leader. “If it is Diefenbaker, or even Fleming or Fulton, or any of those three,” he noted, it isn’t likely that this will change the Tory case to any great extent.” Like most other Liberals, Kidd vastly underestimated Diefenbaker. He was more concerned about the “advertising people” who would be working for him: “I think they are going to be very nasty. They are going to be mean, they are going to distort the truth, they are going to attempt to make this government look ridiculous no matter what they have to say.” He was also alarmed at the influence of the Social Credit and Cooperative Commonwealth parties in the west, and fretted over the unlikely scenario that they would “unite their strength in an attempt to break the Liberal trend.” “It’s difficult to estimate at this distance,” Kidd acknowledged in his correspondence with McRobie, “but I think that we must assume that the election is going to be hard-fought in every single electoral district. We are going to have a fight on our hands. We must not assume that the St. Laurent name and the tradition of the Party, the great results of our policies, are going to count for as much as they have in the past.”

Kidd’s uneasiness did not count for much among the top brass of the Liberal party. A slew of harried correspondence between Kidd and his colleagues at Cockfield Brown suggests

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288 As Bothwell and Kilbourn have shown, there were many Liberals for whom Diefenbaker’s leadership victory was considered as being fortunate event. Bothwell and Kilbourn, C.D. Howe, 321.
that Liberal cabinet ministers made few attempts to keep abreast of the latest techniques and weapons used in political campaigns. The problem was particularly acute when it came to distributing the Liberal narrative via the new medium of television. Kidd had collected data on manufacturers’ television set sales to dealers in Canada. He knew that over 100,000 television sets had been purchased by Canadians in the months of July and August of 1956 alone. He was also aware that an estimated 2,440,000 homes or 61 per cent of the households in Canada owned televisions and that more than 80 per cent of Canadians were within reach of a television station. In a letter written to his associates at the Montreal offices at Cockfield Brown in the fall of 1956, Kidd recognized that although the time had come for the agency to “take this television assignment very seriously… in the present circumstances it just hasn’t been possible to give this the thought and detailed care that it needs.” Cockfield Brown, he insisted, had to “tailor the Liberal story for television” and then it needed to convince the party’s ministers “to advance from zero to some experience in performing in these telecasts.” It followed that the text of the narrative had to be “sorted out and arranged so that it is easy for the listener to follow and it is easy for the speaker to adapt the ideas, either to graphics or symbols of some sort.” When a Liberal minister appeared on television, Kidd instructed, he must think of it as “a performance”; “it is not a speech, it is not a monologue, it is not even a fireside chat, although that has a place in television. These little shows are partly acting, partly education in the classroom style, if certain points are to be grasped by the viewer.” Advice like this was liberally dispensed by Kidd and

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291 Bob Kidd to Gordon Atkinson, 8 April 1957. Kidd and Atkinson were drawing on data taken from CBC’s audience research and the Fowler Report: LAC MG 28 IV C 837.
his associates. However, the Liberals did not make the best use the expertise at their disposal and provided Kidd with very little “narrative” to work with.

As he mulled over the direction the campaign would take, Kidd came to understand his predicament to be threefold. First, he had to find a solution to the paradox of building a campaign around a popular Prime Minister whose image as the dependable “Uncle Louis” came conveniently pre-packaged but whose age had become an electoral liability. A joke that quickly spread amongst the press, that “They’ll run him stuffed if they have to,” must not have been funny to the ad man responsible for marketing his image. Second, he had to overcome the challenge of building a coherent narrative around too many personalities. Each minister had the difficult task of explaining to voters that his behind the scenes accomplishments and technocratic management were responsible for the dynamism and good times of the postwar period. Last but not least, he had to impress upon a group of busy cabinet ministers—many of whom were over 60 years old— that after years of hard work a brief appearance on television might be the key to electoral success. In his frequent correspondence with key members of the Liberal cabinet, Kidd repeated incessantly that a politicians’ “personality, the ideas he is putting across, and the graphics and symbols he is using should make it easy for the viewer to grasp his ideas.” When speaking with Paul Martin about his performance on camera in the fall of 1956, for instance, Kidd emphasized the importance of developing an on-screen persona: “If you [Martin] went to see Ingrid Bergmann in Saint Joan,” Kidd suggested, “you would not likely be

293 Bothwell and Kilbourn, C.D. Howe, 323.
294 Memo sent from Headquarters to all Liberal Candidates, 10 May 1957: LAC NLF MG IV/3/Vol. 835. Kidd relied not only on the free telecasts but also on footage from films that had been produced by the National Film Board throughout the 1950s as a means of linking the Liberal government to nation-building projects. For example, see the letter from Kidd to Mr. Murray Briskin of Associate Screen News, Montreal, sent on 10 May 1957, requesting any footage he might have on “the growth and development of Canada in the last year or so… there must be a great deal of newsreels.” LAC: MG 28/IV/3/Vol. 835/L/Television Advertising.
very impressed with her performance if she was reading her lines stonily and straight from a Teleprompter.”

As the months dragged on, however, Kidd came to the unhappy conclusion that he could not overcome the problems inherent to the Liberal program. Neither could he, as one colleague put it, “throw everything behind the P.M.” Consequently, Kidd focused his attention on an element of the campaign that he hoped could be controlled—television. At a luncheon meeting chaired by Jack Pickersgill, a prominent cabinet minister and one of St. Laurent’s closest advisors, Kidd tried to explain the importance of television to the upcoming campaign. Pickersgill came to his aid with the argument that “the primary purpose of the use of television should be to present as many of the younger cabinet ministers as possible.” “An attempt is being made,” Pickersgill noted, “to create in the public mind the impression that this government consists of a group of tired, muddle-headed and ancient characters who have ceased to be useful to the country.” In order to undermine this line of argument, the Liberal party had to “use the real advantage of television,” and show “the people of Canada who the members of this government really are.” But the cabinet refused to make any definitive plans as to who would appear on screen and what they would do with the time allotted.

Kidd left the meeting in despair and complained to his colleague, Bill Harwood, that “what to do with television is the most difficult and crucial problem facing the Party at the present time, and I would like to think that Cockfield Brown would be prepared to throw the full weight of their experience and resources into the negotiations and consultations so that we can gain valuable experience in the time available before we get into the pre-election campaign period, when it will be too late to consider experiments.” He insisted that the “members of the

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government” should “spend a good amount of their own time and money in developing the telecasts” made available for free by the CBC.²⁹⁹ And to Kidd’s credit, they did. At his insistence the Liberals invested over $110,000 in paid television spots and preparation for the “free telecasts” provided by the CBC; they hired consultants for the purpose of organizing the television effort, coaching the Ministers on how to hone their on-air personas, wear makeup, and dress for the camera; they rented Teleprompters so that they would engage directly with the audience and not flub their lines; ³⁰⁰ and “because of the difficulty of getting the Ministers in front of the camera,” they built their own private television studio modeled after the one used by the American House of Representatives.³⁰¹

His efforts were apparently all for naught. The feedback Kidd received from colleagues, Liberal MPs, lay supporters, and the press reveals the extent to which Liberal ministers failed to grasp the importance of television and new public relations techniques in the late 1950s. “I saw the Prime Minister’s television broadcast on Monday, April 29th, and also that of Mr. Diefenbaker’s which followed it,” said one M.P.: “To say that I was very disappointed is a complete understatement. I thought that the delivery was poor, and the speech material terrifically weak. Whether or not it was an absence of makeup or whatever it was, the effect of the whole broadcast seemed to confirm the Tory allegation that the P.M. is a tired old Man.” “It was unfortunate,” he lamented, “that the Diefenbaker broadcast followed, as the comparison (again understating it) was not favourable to the P.M. I have heard many similar comments.” Another Liberal M.P. observed that St. Laurent’s performance “suffered by comparison or rather contrast with that of Mr. Diefenbaker’s which followed immediately. The latter gained sharply...

²⁹⁹ Ibid.
³⁰¹ Kidd cut out an article from The Wall Street Journal which discussed how the private television studio used by the House of Representatives was subsidized by the government. See The Wall Street Journal, “Expansive Uncle: More Lawmakers Star on Radio, TV, With Help from Government,” June 27, 1956: LAC MG 28/Vol. 837/IV 3. For more on how difficult it was to get the cabinet ministers to appear on television at all, see Kidd to Duncan MacTavish, 15 May 1957: LAC MG/28/IV 3/836.
by using the teleprompter whereas the Prime Minister read his speech. The Diefenbaker material was crisper, sharply critical of the government and was essentially a fighting speech. The Prime Minister’s was loftier, stressing unity, which is not a vote getting issue at present.”

That it was not the production of the show itself but the poor performance of the Prime Minister and key members of his cabinet which disappointed was further underscored by the reactions of the popular press. An article published a month before the election, entitled “Liberals Be Human,” encapsulates the problems plaguing the Liberal campaign. “The federal election campaign came into Canadian living rooms this week via television,” it read. But “if one can judge by what has been seen so far in Winnipeg some of the politicians—and the Liberals in particular,” it might “have been wiser to confine their politicking to the public platform or, at most, to radio.” The Liberals “are just not at home in the merciless medium of television.” St. Laurent had set the pattern in a single, reluctant telecast. The aged leader “refused to make any concessions to the television camera. He did not even try to give the impression that he was speaking directly to his audience. He read a 15 minute speech from a manuscript on the desk before him.” It was suggested that like the Liberal government itself, St. Laurent was “as remote from the viewer as a man in an office in Ottawa.” This was not a performance that would bring St. Laurent any closer to “the public sitting in its shirt sleeves at home.” “At least the Conservatives were trying to loosen up on television,” the author conceded. They attempted “to give the viewer the feeling that they were really putting themselves out to become known to him.” The Liberals could not “loosen up and act like ordinary people,” but rather appeared like “automatons in front of the cameras.” Television was a place for celebrity, staged drama, fights between good and evil, abbreviated and simplified slogans, and striking images.

Unfortunately for the Liberals, the camera was unforgiving. As it turned out, so was the fickle postwar voter.

There were few high ranking Canadian politicians concerned with learning the language of drama in the 1950s. Even fewer allowed public relations experts into their inner circles to help formulate their political platform and strategy for a television audience. John Diefenbaker was among the ones who did. He had spent his formative years in rural Saskatchewan enthralled by the performances of evangelical, Baptist preachers.\footnote{For Diefenbaker’s exposure to the evangelism of Baptist preachers, see Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. I The Crusading Years (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975), 73.} Long and lonely winters on the prairies were made bearable by the voracious reading the political biographies and famous speeches of “freedom fighters” like Pym, Hampden, Burke, Disraeli, Lincoln, and Churchill.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 65-67.} As a defence lawyer practicing in a small village outside of Saskatoon, Diefenbaker loved the “blood and thunder” of the courtroom and pursued the most sensational cases so that he could take centre stage, purportedly to fight for justice on behalf of the unfortunate and the weak.\footnote{Ibid, 104.} Experience had taught him that the greatest speeches—political or otherwise— were stories designed in the manner of dramas that involved an introduction, a problem and conflict, periods of rising and falling action, a climax, and a resolution. The focus of attention was of course on the personality. Nearly all dramas require a hero or villain whose activities push forward the action. That Diefenbaker considered himself as the hero in this winning formula was a given.\footnote{In his memoirs, for example, Diefenbaker refers to himself as “an unsworn enemy of injustice, particularly against the weak.” Ibid., 108.}

It was only after the Second World War that Diefenbaker was exposed to public relations and the potential of television as a storytelling medium. The convergence of politics and celebrity that would soon become his bread and butter could only have occurred in Canada in the 1950s, when a common public culture based on popular consumption—on the mass media,
modern design and franchising, on the automobile, television, and modern urban planning—was made available to the majority of voters.\textsuperscript{308} The urbanization of the country, the wave of postwar immigration, the “baby boom,” increased physical and income mobility, decreased churchgoing, and the rapid diffusion of ideas and influences through the growth of print and electronic media, all helped to erode the foundations of religious and ethnic loyalties that had shaped national policies since before Confederation.\textsuperscript{309} In this more fluid society, voter opinion could and did shift during the life of a government, and even during a campaign.\textsuperscript{310} A politics of image emerged to court a growing demographic of swing voters who would gauge their political allegiances according to issues, policies and candidate characteristics and whose support could be won only by persuasion.\textsuperscript{311}

Diefenbaker took an active interest in the ways that politicians in the United States like Franklin D. Roosevelt, Thomas E. Dewey and Dwight D. Eisenhower applied public relations techniques and the technologies of radio and television to develop their brands and political programs and sell them to a mass audience. The Canadian politician and journalist, Grattan O’Leary, recalled meeting Diefenbaker and his first wife, Edna, at the Republican Convention in


Philadelphia in 1948. The meeting, O’Leary said, “gave me the impression that this man has a leadership thing on his mind.” Diefenbaker had spent “three or four days in Philadelphia watching that convention just how they ran it, and how they operated it and so on, and was extremely interested in the whole thing. No other Canadian was watching.”

At the Republican Convention, O’Leary and Diefenbaker would have witnessed their first modern media campaign. Dewey, the winning candidate, employed cutting edge public relations techniques—the personality-driven, centralized campaign with the requisite slogans, jingles, and photo-ops. Less than four years later his predecessor, Dwight D. Eisenhower, would preside over sweeping changes in the techniques and traditions of presidential communications. The “I like Ike” buttons and made-for-television cartoons, carefully engineered pseudo-moments and televised press conferences were only the tip of the iceberg for Eisenhower, the first “televised president” to hire public relations experts for the purpose of dominating the nation’s mass media system.

O’Leary and Diefenbaker were certainly among the first Canadians to catch a glimpse of this new kind of politics. A shrewd political observer could see that every time the President signed a bill, presented a medal, toasted a prime minister, swore in an official, lamented a death or approved a commemorative stamp he spoke with the larger audience in mind. The personality-driven, national campaign must have appealed to Diefenbaker, who was known to be a “lone wolf” when it came to forging friendships in Parliament and within the Progressive

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312 See Peter Stursberg’s Interview with Grattan O’Leary, 7 February 1973: LAC MG 31/D 78/Vol. 15.
314 Ibid., 8.
315 Dalton Camp makes much of the “American influence” on Diefenbaker’s campaign. See Dalton Camp, Gentlemen, Players, and Politicians, 245.
Conservative party itself. His first attempt at the leadership in 1942 against the more experienced and popular John Bracken revealed how few friends he had within the federal party. As O’Leary had predicted, in 1948 Diefenbaker vied for the leadership once more. He was bested again, this time by the former Premier of Ontario, George Drew, who had a “winning record,” and the full weight of the party hierarchy behind him. With no connections amongst establishment Tories and only a small group of supporters within the rank and file, Diefenbaker, as one of his colleagues recalls, “struggled to find his footing for well over a decade.”

It was not until 1956, when his bid for the leadership developed the kind of momentum that could make him a contender, that Diefenbaker effectively applied the public relations techniques that he had learned years earlier. He did so with the help of Allister Grosart, a Toronto ad man who had managed the campaigns of the Conservative MP Michael Starr, George Drew, and Leslie Frost in Ontario. Grosart was one of the few “backroom boys” involved in Canadian politics willing to experiment with the art of modern political campaigning and possessed of first-hand experience in the field of mass entertainment. He had been the ad man in charge of the Canadian promotion for the movie *Gone with the Wind* and had played the role of “Captain Adventure” on a popular CBC radio show. For him, the transition from Clark Gable to John Diefenbaker was easy; he treated the marketplace of political narratives just like any other in which a number of similar brand names competed for the attention of the public. As Grosart later recalled, “I had been in the business, if you like, of image building, selling an idea

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318 At the PC Convention of 1948, Diefenbaker’s supporters put up a huge sign reading: “Vote for the man from Main St. not Bay St.” Stursberg Interview with Allister Grosart, 5 December 1972: LAC MG/32/C 65/Vol. 9
319 Interview with Dick Spencer, 9 Dec 2006.
320 Grosart’s experience with PR began before the war in the 1930s, when he quit his job at the *Toronto Star* and started his own “publicity” business in Toronto. During the war he wrote “Carry on Canada” for the Wartime Information Bureau. After the war he became a partner at McKim ad agency and worked for Drew and Frost. See Stursberg Interview with Allister Grosart, 5 December 1972: LAC MG/32/C 65/Vol. 9.
or a product. I was certainly in Canada one of the first who went off and started to adapt what
was known as motivation studies into the business of influencing thinking and action. Politics
was an opportunity to really work out these theories on the big stage.”322 To the question “why
should you vote for this leader?” Grosart and Diefenbaker would respond “in public relations
terms.”323 And that meant using “a set of techniques that one would use to sell goods to sell a
politician.”324

The importance of the Progressive Conservative Convention of 1956 as marking a
turning point in the way that political battles were waged in Canada is seldom recognized.
Typically, journalists and scholars focus on its more sensational aspects, and point to
Diefenbaker’s many follies there as foreshadowing his impending political doom.325 Few have
acknowledged that the convention was the first to provide the winner an opportunity to introduce
himself to the Canadian public on national television. Indeed, it was the first televised leadership
convention in Canadian history. It was also the first time in which modern public relations
techniques were employed to sell a candidate.

In the early days of the campaign, Grosart and Diefenbaker predicted that his candidacy
would be “a tough sell” because they knew what they were up against.326 The Progressive
Conservative Convention was scheduled for December 1956, but the press was already
speculating in early September as to who would take the top spot. Although Diefenbaker was
slated to win, it was widely known that there were “Stop Diefenbaker” forces who questioned

323 Grosart to Diefenbaker, “Plan of Campaign” A Preliminary Checklist of the Points Discussed at a Prior Meeting,
325 Denis Smith’s treatment of the Convention is typical. Smith, Rogue Tory, Ch. 6: “The Big Fish, 1951-56,” pp.
188-211. See also Peter Stursberg, Leadership Gained, pp. 3-21; Perlin, The Tory Syndrome, pp. 56-57, Nicholson,
Vision and Indecision, pp. 9-12.
326 Stursberg Interview with Grosart, 5 December 1972. Even as it grew clearer that Diefenbaker would win, his
insecurity and paranoia compelled him to wage an all-out war against everyone whom he believed “was against
whether he “had the qualities essential to lifting his party out of the muck.” Editorials noted that Diefenbaker’s bid was opposed by a powerful group of establishment Tories of the Bay Street variety. In the eyes of his supporters, the tensions between the Ontario centre and the periphery reflected decades-old schisms within the party over questions of social policy that divided the Tory “old guard” from the party’s progressive wing. There was also the perennial problem of Quebec, which had plagued Conservative politics since the days of Laurier and Borden. The Quebec faction of the Conservative party and informed observers in French Canada more generally did not believe that any of the candidates would dispense with old ideas of imperial glory and embrace an independent Canada and a distinctive Canadian flag. Not only was Diefenbaker unilingual but he was also known for having supported conscription and opposed the padlock law that aimed to shut down the operations of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Quebec. Consequently, Donald Fleming, a bilingual candidate and for many a lesser evil, had the support of the Quebec delegates. From the looks of things, it appeared that even if he defeated his many enemies Diefenbaker would have a deeply troubled and divided party on his hands.

However, as the date of the Convention neared it became clear that Diefenbaker would win on the first ballot. On 24 November the Gallup Poll of Canada confirmed that he had the support of 55 per cent of the Conservative voters with his chief competitors, Fleming and Fulton,

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327 *Toronto Star*, Editorial, 22 September 1956.
331 Stursberg reported that “the Conservatives” were “marching again along the path toward their political doom in the *Toronto Star*, 12-14 December 1956. It is sometimes claimed that the Conservative defeats are self-fulfilling prophecies. See Mulroney, *Memoirs*, pp. 37-38; George Perlin, *The Tory Syndrome: Leadership Politics in the Progressive Conservative Party* (Montreal-Kingston: Queen’s-McGill University Press, 1980), especially ch. 3.
trailing behind with 4 and 2 per cent. Because he had been a loser for so long, Diefenbaker refused to take anything for granted. He and Grosart pressed ahead with the media blitz. They treated Diefenbaker’s run for the leadership as a pre-writ campaign that would generate momentum for the federal election scheduled for the following year.

It was thus with an eye towards Diefenbaker’s political future that Grosart prepared and distributed fliers and posters which contained “impartial facts and figures” that focused on his “unique vote-getting appeal” and the exciting prospect that the Tories might even “win with John.” The German origins of Diefenbaker’s surname which was often mispronounced—as “Diefenbacker” prompted Grosart to write a corrective jingle to the popular tune, “Comin’ thro’ the Rye”: Diefenbaker, Diefenbaker, Diefenbaker, Yea/He will lead us to victory on Election Day/ John’s a man who’s a ringing, swinging, swinging our way/ it’s Diefenbaker, Diefenbaker, Diefenbaker, Yea.” Although Diefenbaker was over sixty years old, his cutting edge campaign attracted the majority of Young Progressive Conservatives, Ted Rogers and Brian Mulroney among them. Dalton Camp’s trained eye spotted the American influence on Diefenbaker’s crusade of self-promotion. As an ad man himself, Camp’s disdainful observations reflect the extent to which he was troubled by his own role in encouraging this new politics of persuasion:

The demonstrations cast up the mirror image of American politics and reflect the pubescent demands of the new electronic media. Like the old person taking up with a nubile child, the delegates prance and parade in the aisles, grinning self-consciously, recognizing the superfluity of this unfamiliar exercise, blindly hopeful it will somehow advance their cause.

333 “We Can Win with John,” Written by the Parliamentary Committee for John Diefenbaker, November 1956, Glenbow Archives, PC Part Fonds, MI744.
334 According to Grosart, the negative press that Diefenbaker received because of his German origins began during the leadership race in 1948. Stursberg Interview with Grosart, 5 December 1972: LAC MG/32/C 65/Vol. 9.
335 Interview with Brian Mulroney 11 January 2007; Brian Mulroney, Memoirs (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2007), pp. 36-38.
336 Camp, Gentlemen, 245.
“Diefenbaker’s demonstration is the best,” Camp observed, bearing as it did “the impresario’s touch of Grosart.”

As predicted, Diefenbaker won a first ballot victory: 774 votes to Donald Fleming’s 393 and Fulton’s 117. Even before the vote, however, he delivered a perfectly timed pre-writ speech that was written not merely for the delegates at the convention but also for a national, television audience. “I have one love,” he said, “Canada; one purpose, Canada’s greatness; one aim, Canadian unity from the Atlantic to the Pacific.” In a characteristic passage he invited Canadians to join him on a national crusade: “Will you, ladies and gentlemen, whether you belong to this party or not—the unseen [television] audience that is present here in spirit—I ask you, my fellow citizens to join with us in a national crusade, united in a dedication to our traditions, forward looking, looking forward to tomorrow.” Not accustomed to hearing political talk couched in such biblical terms, the live audience responded with deafening applause. At once the intrigue, backstabbing, and hair pulling that went on behind the scenes and would be exhumed in myriad memoirs and studies to come faded into the background. Even for those who were against him, and there were many, the magical quality of the moment was indisputable.

In the only book-length study of the federal election of 1957, John Meisel points to the 1956 Convention as the launching point for what he calls the “Diefenbaker Revolution.” Meisel argues that Diefenbaker’s victory led to drastic changes in the Conservative hierarchy. For him, the defeat of the privileged “old guard” from Bay Street that had long dominated the party’s political agenda was accompanied by the rise of “progressives” who sought to radically transform not only the party’s policies but the way that it was perceived by Canadians.

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337 Ibid.
340 Sévigny, *This Game of Politics*, etc.
establishment Tories who controlled the Progressive Conservative Association and its president, Léon Balcer of Quebec, had finally lost their grip on the organization. Unlike the Liberals, whose party offices were governed by the executive officers of the National Liberal Federation and not the party leader, Diefenbaker alone was responsible for filling the vacant posts. It is in this way that the power vacuum at Progressive Conservative National Headquarters was eventually filled by Grosart, who became National Director in the middle of March, 1957.

Perhaps because it was written so soon after the election, Meisel’s book offers the best analysis of the structural changes that Diefenbaker made to party organization in Canada. Meisel would be a prolific contributor to the debate amongst academics, journalists and politicians in the 1960s over the extent to which public relations techniques had created a dichotomy between image and issue. After the election of 1957, Meisel had enjoyed personal access to Grosart and the “top secret” campaign materials at National Headquarters. It would have been difficult for him to miss the countless headlines referring to Grosart’s colossal influence on the Canadian political scene. For the first time in Canadian history, wrote one journalist, an “unelected ad man was the second most powerful figure in Ottawa.” “The Liberals’ Bob Kidd ran the famous cradle to the grave campaign,” wrote another, “but where Kidd was merely advisor to the campaign committee, Grosart rules the party as Diefenbaker’s right hand.” Grosart became known as the advertising genius who helped produce and distribute Diefenbaker’s political image, make his policies palatable to the public, and who, through T.V.’s black magic, turned

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342 Balcer detested Diefenbaker. See Stursberg’s Interview with Leon Balcer (n/d), Stursberg Fonds, LAC MG 31 D 78 Vol. 13.
343 Meisel, Election, 1957, 73. See also Stursberg’s Interview with Grosart, 5 December 1972: LAC MG/32/C 65/Vol. 9.
345 Stursberg Interview with Grosart, 5 December 1972.
Canadian politics into a U.S.-style popularity contest. Apart from the unwanted attention that Grosart incurred in the process, that was exactly his plan.

Diefenbaker’s PR team provides us with one of the first political studies in image making in Canada. Theirs was a relentless and determined image craft which hinged on the political persona that Diefenbaker projected. The attention Grosart paid to public relations and the new technology of television marks a turning point which indicates the extent to which the politics of the future would rely on the marketing of a politicians’ image. To thrive, the leaders of the future would have to master not only the old arts of rhetoric and retail politics but the newer tricks of conveying the impression—no matter now honestly or accurately—of unmistakable authenticity. Grosart’s labours to control the impression that Diefenbaker made on Canadians were rudimentary compared to those used by public relations firms employed by today’s political parties. Yet his experimental approach with television and sometimes fumbling attempts to change the ways that Canadians viewed Diefenbaker and his message are instructive; they suggest that structural changes in Canadian culture wrought by new technology and mass consumption shaped the politics of the postwar era.

Being the PR guru that he was, Grosart was plugged in to the technological, psychological, and political tricks of image culture. And at the heart of it all was the increasing importance of television. Like H.E. Kidd, Grosart possessed the hard data proving that television was becoming an increasingly important factor in the political process in Canada. He paid close attention to the “Conclusions and Recommendations of the Audience Research Study of the 1956 P.C. Convention Broadcasts” which was conducted by the Canadian Broadcast Corporation. On the surface, the report suggests that the Progressive Conservative leadership

349 Kidd analyzed the television coverage of the 1956 PC Party Convention himself: LAC MG 28/IV 3/837 Television-Experimental Broadcasts. Grosart had access to these, too, in addition to the latest data on television and advertising in Canada. See, for example, “Advertising and Publicity,” Election 1957: LAC MG 28/IV 2/Vol. 558.
convention was a television disaster for both the party and the CBC. But for Grosart, the
“Research Study” provided a wealth of information about Canada’s burgeoning television
audience and a ready-made list of ways to improve. The Convention itself was merely a dry-run
for the real thing—a federal election that was months away.

According to the study, “the Convention broadcasts attracted the usual ‘public affairs’
audience” which tended to receive them “very well and made no major criticisms.” Not
surprisingly, it was acknowledged by the CBC that “the majority of Canadians did not find the
Convention a substitute for regular entertainment shows”; “On the evening when all of the quiz
shows and popular entertainment programs like Denny Vaughan and Juliette were on, the ratings
for the convention dropped substantially.” Such mixed findings were put in stark contrast to the
ratings generated for leadership conventions in the United States. South of the border, “evening
telecasts of both the 1956 and Democratic Conventions drew audiences as large as those of many
entertainment programs.” To the CBC, the success of American Conventions suggested that
Canadians Convention telecasts could attract larger audiences if they copied a particular formula.
First, “all their [American] audiences were captive.” Second, the Americans “had a direct
connection between the conventions and the presidential election.” Third, “the showmanship of
the proceedings amused the average TV fan, and the broadcasts gave the audience a sense of
participating in convention activities.” Fourth, “shots of informal meetings and conversations
had great human appeal.” Finally, “the mass interest that publicity aroused in the conventions
before they began contributed to their popularity.” The subtext of the report was that Canadian
political parties should direct their efforts towards matching the organization and effective on-
screen showmanship of their American counterparts.

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There were many among the Canadian political establishment who were uninterested in learning from the experimental telecast. Interestingly enough, among them was the Liberals’ H.E. Kidd, whose analysis of the television coverage of the PC leadership Convention focused solely on the negative impact that the medium could have on public opinion. He joked about the follies perpetrated by the Conservatives competition on the floor. “There should be a red light on the Rostrum when the mikes are live,” Kidd teasingly observed, “so that anyone near the mike is warned not to say something which would sound unfortunate.” He made a point of including in his report an incident in which the PC Convention’s chief organizer, Dick Bell, was heard saying “I'm damned if I'm going to wreck my voice on this outfit” on live television. At the end of the report, in all seriousness, Kidd argued that mishaps such as these “were apt to disturb not only public interest but attitudes towards the Party itself.” He came to the conclusion that “having the upcoming Liberal convention televised was not a good thing.”

Grosart knew better. The general observations that he gleaned from the Convention broadcast and the lessons derived from the CBC Study proved crucial to his plan for the advertising and publicity of the 1957 campaign. He saw that the longer the broadcast and the more heavily-laden the campaign speech, the less it holds the audience. He judged that more effort had to be put into preparing publicity to be delivered over multiple mediums—newspapers, radio and on television—in advance of Diefenbaker’s telecasts and stump speeches. But perhaps most importantly, given the poor performances of politicians like Dick Bell at the Convention, he realized that he had to educate everyone, from the top PC politicians to

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backbenchers and their campaign committees, about the importance of constituency publicity to their electoral success.

To that end, Grosart made the organization of public relations for the rank-and-file members of the party a priority. Many of them were young and inexperienced “Diefenbaker candidates” who had no interest toiling under the thumb of the old Tory establishment but were keen to work with the new “Chief.” The veteran Tories who stayed on knew as little about cutting edge public relations techniques as the neophytes. So Grosart prepared a “Candidate’s Kit” for every constituency which, in addition to a cornucopia of other campaign aids, contained a series of pamphlets on the fine art of publicity, called “Campaigning to Win.” The goal was to transcend Canada’s massive geography by developing the political acumen of Tory foot soldiers. Thus, the first pamphlet provided them with some basic information about the three phases of an election campaign—the months prior to the issuing of the writ, the eight weeks between the issuing of the writ and the election, and Election Day itself. It elaborated on the door-to-door campaign, the responsibilities of the candidate’s family, especially their wives, and informed them how to manage volunteers, organize the committee room, process poll data, and prepare organize for the general election. The kit also provided newly nominated candidates with a copy of the House of Commons Debates for the 1957 session, major speeches delivered by Diefenbaker and other leading Conservatives on important issues of the day, a comprehensive

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353 Jack Horner, at the time a youngish Albertan candidate nominated for a seat in the 1958 election, provides a good description of the number of new “Diefenbaker” candidates that joined the party after the ‘Diefenbaker Revolution’ and the toppling of the old guard. See Jack Horner, *My Own Brand* (Edmonton: Hurting Publishers, Ltd., 1980), Ch. 2; Meisel, *The Canadian General Election of 1957*, pp. 77-78.

354 The first pamphlet in the series ‘Campaigning to Win’ was prepared, for the most part, by prominent Progressive Conservative and early Diefenbaker supporter, George Hees. Progressive Conservative Party Fonds: LAC MG 28/IV 2/ Vol. 588.
summary of press reports critical of the government during the recent session, and the CBC regulations governing political television and radio broadcasting.\textsuperscript{355}

In addition to covering the basics, Grosart made a point of educating candidates about the potential of television to make or break their political careers. The second pamphlet in the series, entitled “Constituency Publicity: Some Comments and Suggestions for Candidates and their Committees,” focused solely on the public relations aspects of the campaign and paid special attention to the problem of television. Grosart used the Socratic Method as a means of educating his students on the fine art of PR.\textsuperscript{356} The dialogue began with the simple question as to whether or not a candidate “should use T.V. in his campaign.” “I would advise you not to,” Grosart answered, “and yet, if a candidate can be effective on T.V., he will help himself enormously. If he is not effective, he will damage his own and his party’s cause.” One’s performance on television was therefore not to be taken lightly. “But supposing the candidate decides to go on TV?” asked Grosart’s eager student. “Well,” he replied, “for those who have had little or no experience with this medium, the following general comments may be useful”:

The prime maxim of television is to ‘be yourself.’ Bear in mind that when you are on TV you are, in effect, in the living rooms of thousands of homes. Therefore, it is unwise to say or do anything you wouldn’t do under just those circumstances…The biggest asset you have is sincerity. Avoid over-emphasis, exaggerated gestures or sudden movement, frowns or scowls… Even though you are not speaking remember you still may be in the camera’s eye. Therefore, avoid nervous mannerisms such as pulling at the ear or nose, rubbing your eyes, clock watching, &c… if you are using prompting material—i.e. figures and statistics and quotations marks written down, &c—when you come to use them, don’t use them openly. Don’t be furtive; you simply cannot fool a TV audience. Don’t wear a stick pin, it will reflect light and distract the viewer’s attention… Wear solid coloured ties—avoid flashy ties as they distract your audience… if you have a 5 o’clock shadow shave just before your TV appearance; don’t feel that makeup is sissy—if the TV staff offer this service, accept it cheerfully… As for sarcasm on TV, it is the deadliest of all emotions. I am always happy to see our opponents use it. We win votes on their time.\textsuperscript{357}

\textsuperscript{355} The amount of Grosart memos and other campaign materials collected by the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta—perhaps one of the smallest PC party organizations in all of Canada at the time—is testament to his efforts to focus on building up the grass-roots of the party: Glenbow, Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta Fonds, M1744.

\textsuperscript{356} Grosart was classically educated and quite bookish. Stursberg Interview with Grosart, 14 February 1973; Journalist Doug Fisher called Grosart a ‘Renaissance Man,’ Interview with Doug Fisher, 18 Feb 2007.

\textsuperscript{357} “Constituency Publicity: Some Comments and Suggestions for Candidates and their Committees”: Glenbow, Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta, M1744.
For Grosart, the new “age of television” was all about audience perception; television was a dramatic medium which required the analytical tools of dramatic criticism and public relations theory to contribute to a better understanding of its nature and aspects of its psychological, social, and cultural impact. He realized that in the new art of politics special attention had to be paid to “selling the drama.” And everybody knew that the drama revolved around the Progressive Conservative leader, John G. Diefenbaker.

In the preliminary plans for the campaign distributed amongst the triumvirate of organizers—Grosart, Gordon Churchill and George Hees—early in the fall of 1956, Grosart made it clear that “the personality of John Diefenbaker” would be the organizing theme. In the plan, he emphasized the importance of the whistle-stop tour and Diefenbaker’s oratorical genius on the stump, and was sure to acknowledge his “drawing power” of the circus-like spectacles that were scheduled to be held in high school gymnasiums, hotel ballrooms, bandstands, and hockey rinks across the country. In the late 1950s the grand political spectacle had not yet been supplanted by the television. A significant percentage of campaign funds for the leading political parties were still spent on massive political rallies.

There was no denying the powerful impact that Diefenbaker made on the podium. The Diefenbaker rally held in Vancouver on May 24, 1957 proved a crucial turning point in the campaign. Well over five thousand people flocked to the Vancouver Auditorium that night to hear Diefenbaker speak—three thousand of them managed to get in while approximately two thousand stood and cheered outside on a side street while listening to Diefenbaker on a loud speaker. He had arrived in style with a thirty car motorcade that drove from the airport straight

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361 John Duffy also recognizes the rally at Vancouver as a turning point for Diefenbaker in the 1957 campaign. See John Meisel, John Duffy, Fights of Our Lives, p. 206.
through downtown Vancouver. At the head of the procession was a five-piece Dixieland jazz band riding in a pink convertible playing the tune, “Saints Go Marching By [sic].”³⁶² Upon arrival, Diefenbaker encountered the largest audience garnered by any party during the campaign. As he stood up to speak, Diefenbaker proclaimed that the sheer size of the audience indicated the extent to which, “across this country Canadians as a whole agree that something is happening.”³⁶³ The positive response to his performance in Vancouver gathered momentum as the Diefenbaker campaign made its way across the nation. After the rally, editorials across English Canada remarked how the pace of the election had quickened. Pundits went on the record, some in downright disbelief, saying that that the political tide might well be turning.³⁶⁴

The Liberal campaign was increasingly viewed as having the opposite dynamic. As John Duffy contends, the mammoth rally organized in Toronto’s Maple Leaf Gardens on 6 June should serve as “a textbook example for public relations experts concerned with the difficulty of controlling what happens at big venues.”³⁶⁵ Grosart was ecstatic when the climactic rally of the Liberal campaign devolved into farce. In an interview with the journalist, Peter Stursberg, he recalled that the Grits had to plan an “extravaganza of epic proportions in order to fill the massive venue.” Diefenbaker had put on a show in Vancouver, but it paled in comparison to this Liberal rally. There were “costumed Indians who performed a war-dance in the isles, massed bands, bagpipes, dancing girls… drum majorettes, cheer leaders, cow bells, noise makers, Lorne Green as master of ceremonies, and a tandem bicycle.” It would seem that they played on every gender cliché and ethnic stereotype in the book in order to put on the show. Unfortunately for the

³⁶⁵ Interview with John Duffy, 20 April 2007.
Liberals, the spectacle had attracted observers of every political stripe. Grosart claimed, with a little embellishment, “were old Tory men and women out to hear the Bell Sister Singers.” At the climax of the show, when St. Laurent rose to deliver the keynote address, a 15 year old protestor jumped up on stage and tore up a campaign poster. When “an alderman who thought he would be a hero” attempted to remove the boy, the young rascal fell down a set of stairs and hit his head on the concrete floor, knocking him unconscious. The boy turned out to be fine but the incident only added to the image of the Liberal Party as an unrepentant group of grumpy old men who had no qualms with running roughshod over voters. Rumour had it that Grosart “put the kid up to it” and that it was part of his “Machiavellian scheme.” It was an accident. But that did not prevent talk about St. Laurent’s encounter with the boy from spreading quickly across the country, shattering the wholesome image of the benevolent “Uncle Louis.”

All of the uncertainties that accompanied big tent politics and the expense of staging such grand extravaganzas could be avoided by employing the new medium of television. The savvy politician understood that bridging the gap between the old style stump speech, the live spectacle, the main-streetting, and the orderly exuberance of the televised speech and tactically effective public relations campaign who would win the day. Television played a key role in the Diefenbaker publicity campaigns of 1957 and 1958. Three years before the televised 1960 presidential debates between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy, in which matters of lighting, makeup, and five-o’clock shadow reduced national issues into trivial dimensions and tipped the balance in favour of the younger, fresh faced, TV-friendly candidate, Grosart was warning

367 Stursberg Interview with Grosart, 5 December 1972: LAC MG/32/C 65/Vol. 9
369 Stursberg Interview with Grosart, 5 December 1972. See also Peter Stursberg, *Leadership Gained*, p. 49.
Diefenbaker about the pros and cons of television. His attention focused on honing Diefenbaker’s on-screen image.

“The TV camera,” Grosart remarked after the triumph of the 1958 federal election, has a remarkable fidelity in transmitting a man’s character.” Diefenbaker honed his on-screen image by “maximizing a natural kind of encounter rather than presenting a “distinguished address” or a false, too homely atmosphere.” As Diefenbaker grew more accustomed to appearing on camera, Grosart urged him to use less and less makeup. When Diefenbaker was tired, it was reported that “he was allowed to remain looking tired, stimulating sympathy from his viewers.” His opponents in the 1957 and 1958 federal elections, St. Laurent and Lester B. Pearson, hated television and were constantly “fighting the lights and the script.” But Diefenbaker loved television. “The harsher the lights the more he looks like Abraham Lincoln,” Grosart said. “On TV Pearson and St. Laurent are 20 per cent themselves,” he said, “Diefenbaker’s 120 per cent.”

To the ad men of the 1960s and 70s whose expertise in shaping the “television age personality” was more professionally developed, the efforts of Grosart to sculpt Diefenbaker’s television personality appeared naïve. Dick O’Hagan has said that “Diefenbaker was undisciplined in terms of how he approached television” and finds “it hard to believe that Grosart gave him proper coaching.” Indeed, much of the evidence suggests that Grosart would solicit advice about television from just about anyone. He kept a file containing numerous letters written by journalists, pundits, and hacks which was dedicated toperfecting televised political performance.

One such was penned by a young prairie journalist named R. H. Macdonald, a stalwart Diefenbaker supporter who prepared a detailed analysis the Chief’s television performance during the two federal elections. The television audience, Macdonald said, “were as single minded in their interest as they would be over a Grey Cup football game, and it is not derogatory to the PM to say so.” Macdonald suggested that in the future, Diefenbaker should make television appearances on the most important holidays of the year—Victoria Day, Remembrance Day, New Years day—so he could become “a fixture in Canadian households like the Queen at Christmastime.” “A period of 15 minutes should be enough,” thought Macdonald: the people like their entertainment and might cheerfully give up 15 minutes TV time to the PM but even the PM should not ask for more.” Diefenbaker’s appearance had to combine just the right amount of drama with the seriousness that the subject matter required. “In the mind’s eye,” Macdonald argued, “I envision a night shot of the Peace Tower with the clock booming on the hour, the camera switching to the East Block with one single lighted office (the PM’s), no voice announcements but the printed message ‘The Prime Minister of Canada,’ then the outside camera yields to the camera inside the office where the PM is seated at his desk. His should be the first voice heard.” Macdonald admitted that it was “doubtful that the Canadian people would swallow as much drama as the Americans. But the show should be dramatic all the same.”

Amateur advice like this regularly passed through the hands of Grosart and Kidd, revealing the extent to which both of the leading political parties were just beginning to feel their way towards selling politics and politicians on television. That Grosart kept careful note of it all suggests his awareness of a growing segment of postwar voters who expected the drama that they saw on television to play itself out on the political stage.\footnote{R.H. Macdonald on Selling Diefenbaker on Television-Election 1957: JGDP XXI/14/A/426} To be sure, in certain political

\footnote{In February, 1958, The CBC sent memos to all four political parties with tips on how to produce better television broadcasts: LAC: MG 28/IV/3/841.}
circles, the idea that the television screen created both a frame and a stage for dramatic political performances was a hard sell.\textsuperscript{377} It is telling that after Tory’s massive victory in 1958, the influential Liberal, Jack Pickersgill, remarked that he had “never been able to understand or appreciate the appeal that Mr. Diefenbaker has on television.” “People say he is a great performer,” Pickersgill said, “but you know, I have always preferred opera to rock!”\textsuperscript{378} Pickersgill was not the only cultural critic of his generation who was blind to the appeal of rock and roll. Like many of his peers, he might have been of the opinion that mass culture threatened to debase politics as much as it did the more civilized “high” forms of culture.\textsuperscript{379} A few months after Diefenbaker beat St. Laurent in the 1957 federal election, it is likely that cultural critics like Pickersgill looked on in disgust when Elvis arrived at Vancouver’s Empire Stadium and performed to a roaring crowd of 24,000 screaming and delirious fans.\textsuperscript{380} One year later, Diefenbaker won the biggest majority in Canadian history with a combination of big-tent spectacles and television appearances that generated a kind of rock and roll buzz that Canadian politics had never seen before. All signs indicated that it was rock and not opera that the appealed to the postwar masses and that television had altered the political game whether the Liberals liked it or not.

Communications technology had changed and so too would Canadian politics. The post-election statistics conducted by the CBC indicated that by 1957, television had become the chief source of political information, surpassing newspapers and ahead of family and friends. Although the CBC focused its attention on evaluating the performance of its special series of

\textsuperscript{377} Martin Esslin, \textit{The Age of Television} (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1982), pp. 27-28; Rutherford, \textit{When Television was Young}, 403.
\textsuperscript{378} Stursberg, \textit{Leadership Gained}, 53.
\textsuperscript{379} For more on contemporary debates surrounding the impact of television on Canadian culture, see Leonard Kuffert, \textit{A Great Duty: Canadian Responses to Modern Life and Mass Culture in Canada} (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), pp. 190-198.
\textsuperscript{380} This website provides an audio clip of the press conference that took place in Vancouver at 8:04 pm on 31 August 1957 just minutes before Elvis performed for thousands of delirious men and women: \url{http://www.elvispresleymusic.com.au/pictures/1957_august_31.html}
campaign telecasts, which appealed mostly to the “existing public affairs audience,” the report indicates the extent to which television news was the primary source for average Canadians. The field work for the study was handled by two commercial market research organizations: Gruneau Research Ltd which conducted 1,593 personal interviews with adults in four cities: Montreal (French), Toronto, Halifax, and Edmonton immediately after the election. A second report was filed by Elliot-Haynes Ltd., which conducted a series of four telephone recall surveys in Montreal (English and French), Toronto, London, Halifax, Regina and Vancouver. In each city 300 TV homes were interviewed the day after the last four national campaign telecasts during the latter part of May and in early June, 1957.\(^3\)

In 1957, there were thousands of “TV homes” in Canada from which to take these samples. According to Gruneau, 90 per cent of adults in Montreal, 83 per cent in Toronto, 96 per cent in Halifax, and 72 per cent in Edmonton owned televisions. 64 per cent of these “TV households turned in to some portion of the election night telecasts” on 10 June that year. It was forecasted that the number would jump to 70 percent for the 1958 election night telecasts set to run on 31 March. The CBC predicted that numbers would rise due to increased interest in the 1958 campaign, the larger, captive wintertime audience, the increased length of the telecast and its earlier time slot, and as a result of the more polished, professional, and streamlined nationwide telecast—a show prepared in lieu of regionally produced broadcasts that were made available the previous year. It followed that “a higher per cent of TV households were expected to watch the 1958 election night telecast” simply because “the total number of households available for viewing had increased by 500,000 to an estimated 2.9 million since July 1, 1957.”\(^4\)

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\(^3\) 1957 (June 10) Election Campaign Broadcasts [CBC Ottawa Research].  
\(^4\) Election Night, 31 March 1958 Special Report [CBC Ottawa Research].
Reports like these illustrate how early it was that television became an important factor in the political process in Canada. To be sure, press comment indicated that the election telecasts run by the CBC were viewed as being “dreadfully dull,” and “ill-advised.” The Montreal Star advised that “the politician should remember that it is supremely easy to fall asleep in an easy chair and a good many voters must be doing just that with the kinds of TV appeals we’ve had to date.”383 But the CBC believed such negativity was a consequence of the rising concerns of the press over the attention being garnered by a rival medium—and they had the numbers to prove it. According to the CBC Report, covering English network telecasts, each of the national campaign programs shown on the 7th and 8th of May reached about 145,000 households in Toronto alone, with an estimated 285,000 persons viewing.” Despite the fact that the telecasts had attracted the usual political affairs audience, the CBC noted that “8 out of 10 viewers in all 4 major cities agreed that the telecasts they saw were either ‘very interesting’ or ‘quite interesting.’”384

The election night telecast, scheduled for the evening of 10 June 1957, had attracted even more viewers. A report by International Surveys Limited conducted for the CBC indicated that “64 per cent of all TV households in Canada tuned into some portion of the election night telecasts.” When asked how much of the evening viewers spent viewing the telecasts, 40.2 percent of them responded by saying they watched it for most of the evening and 14.5 percent for at least an hour or two, indicating the extent to which election night program was an event in their households.385 Thousands of people had tuned in on purpose and many of them kept watching because they wanted to. Statistics like these must have been encouraging to CBC producers who were keen to make their political programs fit for primetime television.

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383 Montreal Star, 8 May 1957. See also the Globe and Mail, 7 May 1957 and the St. Croix Courier, 9 May 1957. All of these newspapers had negative views as to the popularity of the CBC’s campaign telecasts.
384 1957 (June 10) Election Campaign Broadcasts [CBC Ottawa Research].
385 Election Campaign Study of the Toronto Metropolitan Area [one of 4 reports—including Montreal, Edmonton, Halifax and others], Gruneau Research Ltd., August 1957 [CBC Ottawa Research].
However novel the special campaign telecasts were, the report noted that the average audience for the National Television News (11pm) during the same week in May was 3 to 4 times larger. All told, when Canadians obtained information about election campaigns, over 40.5 per cent of them got it from news programs while only one quarter of those television viewers were watching the special programming provided by the CBC. In the survey, viewers were asked the following question: “Forgetting about Election Day itself, and thinking back over the campaign, from which source did you get the most information?” The respondents rated their sources of information from 1-7. Television rated at the number one source, followed by newspaper, radio, friends/associated, family, magazines, meetings/local campaign activities. Those without televisions got most of their information, in order from one through seven: radio, newspaper, friends/associates, family, magazine, television, meetings/local campaign activities. Numbers like these indicate that voters were still reading newspapers, listening to the radio, and talking to their friends, families and colleagues to get news of the elections campaigns. Television had emerged as a national medium, but voters still gathered their information from a variety of sources.

The CBC was quick to point out that figures such as these could not prove how far televisions impacted the choices that people made when they voted. Understanding the complexity of the television viewing experience and its impact on political outcomes was quite beyond the CBC and the final deductions that it made were cautious. “Most of the signs,” the report concluded, “seem to point toward a heightened interest and familiarity with all phases of the political process, as a result of TV’s growing influence. People ‘use’ television as they ‘use’ other media, interpreting everything in terms of their existing biases and expectations, but as in

386 1957 (June 10) Election Campaign Broadcasts [CBC Ottawa Research].
387 Election Campaign Study in the Toronto Metropolitan Area [one of 4 Reports—including Montreal, Edmonton, Halifax and others], Gruneau Research Ltd., August 1957 [CBC Ottawa Research].
the case of other media, the information and impressions left by television are absorbed into an ongoing stream of experience through which opinions are formed and modified.” Taking its cue from Leo Bogart’s just-published book entitled, *The Age of Television*, the report suggested that “what promises to make TV a more potent political force than radio or the press is 1) its relatively close resemblance to face-to-face persuasion, 2) its ability to command vast quantities of the public’s time, and 3) its potential as a dramatic medium to build up the leader’s image and to shape and even simplify his rhetoric”.

The experience of televising the Conservative Leadership Convention in 1956, the Liberal Leadership Convention in 1958, and the two federal elections that took place in the interim had taught the CBC that the “focus of the programs should be on news as entertainment.” Future election telecasts must be “shaped to emphasize excitement and personality and so capture viewers’ interest—the priority should be placed on showmanship.” In the future, aspects of the campaigns should also be “made to suit the needs of television.”

Seen from this angle, the great priority of this new kind of election coverage was to attract an audience, not to provide an accurate portrayal of what happened—the classic bias of North American television. After all, it was drama and entertainment that television audiences were seeking, not pedantic lectures on how Liberals were responsible for the postwar boom and certainly not aged and pompous politicians who flaunted their good will.

In the late 1950s, most of the viewers who tuned into the CBC news or watched national political leaders deliver speeches on special telecasts judged their performances based on preconceived biases that they already had. Statistics collected by the CBC indicate that viewers

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388 This part of the report is quoted directly from Leo Bogart, *The Age of Television* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1956), 230.
389 Conclusions and Recommendations of the Audience Research Study of the 1956 P.C. Convention Broadcasts [CBC Ottawa Research].
tended to associate most with politician and the political party that they traditionally voted for.\footnote{Viewer Evaluation as to Which Party Made Best Use of TV Time By Party For June 10, 1957 [CBC Ottawa Research].} Yet because they aired during primetime and in lieu of regularly scheduled television programming, the free time television broadcasts which the Liberals, Progressive Conservatives, Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Social Credit parties were allotted by the CBC were something altogether different. They attracted viewers and voters of all political stripes in addition to those who were as yet undecided. Each party was allotted a number of time slots based on the percentage of seats that they held in the House of Commons. The Liberals were allowed to conduct eight twenty-minute television broadcasts. The Conservatives were given seven twenty-minute slots, while the CCF and Social Credit Parties were allocated 5 and 4 twenty-minute telecasts, respectively.\footnote{“Federal Election 1957—Free Time Election Broadcasts.” PC Party Fonds, LAC: MG 28/IV 2/559.} At the end of April, 1957, Gallup polls indicated that the Liberals would win 47 per cent of the popular vote followed by the Progressive Conservatives with 32 per cent. Based on statistics collected by the CBC preceding the federal election, however, it was Diefenbaker who was rated first among television viewers. The Progressive Conservatives were ranked as the party which made best use of its television time among 42.8 per cent of viewers, with the Liberals and CCF trailing far behind at 11.6 per cent and 4.4 per cent.\footnote{Viewer Evaluation as to Which Party Made Best Use of TV Time By Party For June 10, 1957 [CBC Ottawa Research].}

Numbers like these do not indicate that Diefenbaker’s television performance tipped the scale in his favour in 1957. Certainly the momentum created by his upset win over Louis St. Laurent might have influenced the television viewers’ response to the survey. And yet there were few at the time who would quarrel with the survey’s conclusions. When compared to Louis St. Laurent and, later in the election of 1958, against the likes of Lester B. Pearson, even the most stalwart Liberal had to admit that Diefenbaker had a “dominant personality, a hot
personality that TV gravitated to.” As Dick O’Hagan vividly recalls, “Diefenbaker was a visual feast in many ways, just with his appearance and his manner and his stylistic characteristics.”\textsuperscript{393} Walter Grey of The Globe and Mail observed that Diefenbaker “found himself thoroughly at home appearing on television which would explain why the Conservatives used the medium extensively in the [1958] campaign.”\textsuperscript{394}

Perhaps this is why Grosart liked the medium so much. Unlike his Liberal counterparts who criticized the rise of images and lamented the coming of mass culture and the mass media, Grosart felt that Canadians citizens knew enough to distinguish between sham and reality and that if offered a choice would prefer the simple truth to a contrived image. “Public relations are democracy in action,” Grosart contended. Just like in a court of law, where “the defence counsel ignores certain facts and emphasizes others. The crown attorney does the same thing.” In the end, he argued that “the truth is what they both say.” The job of the ad man was thus to “make the best possible case… and hope that the other side will make the best possible case.” Because that, Grosart argued, is “the basis of democracy. The people are judge and jury.” Grosart went so far as to argue that TV could actually be used as a tool for improving the democratic process “If an image is the least bit false,” he said, “TV will destroy it, and some Liberals agree that TV destroyed Uncle Louis… but in the end he grew tired. What had first been spontaneous became shop-worn, and TV showed it.”\textsuperscript{395}

After the 1957 and 1958 federal elections, the Tories were accused of “building a cult of leadership behind Diefenbaker’s image.” Grosart responded, unabashedly, that “we did it, and we’re glad we did it.”\textsuperscript{396} The effect of the explosion of television on Canadian culture in the 1950s—a single decade in which the medium passed from a commercial experiment to what

\textsuperscript{393} Basen Interview with Dick O’Hagan, 19 June 2006.
\textsuperscript{396} The Ottawa Journal, 21 June 1958.
many viewed as a social menace—would be the subject of independent study and controversy for years to come. A little over a decade later, academics, journalists, and politicians at the Couchiching Conference would debate how far the “dichotomy between image and issue” was true or false.\footnote{36th Annual Couchiching Conference, Program 3 31 July 1967; Program 4 Tuesday August 1 1967.} Marshall McLuhan made the famous argument that “[i]n all countries, the party system has folded like the organizational chart. Policies and issues are useless for election purposes, since they are too specialized and hot. The shaping of the candidate’s integral image has taken the place of discussing particular points-of-view.”\footnote{McLuhan quote taken from Joe McGinnis, \textit{The Selling of the President}, 1968 (New York: Trident Press, 1969), 28.}

But for the Tories there was no dichotomy between image and message. In hindsight it is easy to argue that Diefenbaker’s vision was a slogan and not a policy. But at the time, that is not what Diefenbaker, his advisors, or the public believed. All of the evidence suggests that they felt they had a real and viable plan. The Conservatives used a combination of big-tent personal politics and the modern medium of television to build Diefenbaker’s image. As we shall see, Diefenbaker’s national narrative was shaped to play up to the whims of the strategically calculated mass audience of television viewers and the personal audience, that relatively miniscule segment of voters who showed up to see him perform on the stump. Diefenbaker’s vision was a hybrid of old and new—it was delivered to tickle the fantasies of young Canadians, the students listening intently hoping for adventure, the bobby-soxers yipping and squealing, young urban couples who moved to the suburbs and were looking for excitement; but it was also a personal narrative meant to appeal to men in work shorts and sports shirts, the women in house dresses with babies in arm, the farmers observing silently. For different groups of Canadians, Diefenbaker’s image embodied divergent values and meanings. The varied images he projected
were made to reflect their concerns and ideas about themselves, about the communities in which they lived, and national political life in general.

Throughout the 1950s, as the Tory party fumbled with its way forward, trying to eke out a way to show Canadian voters why it was different from the Liberal party and to make its voice heard in the mainstream of national political discourse, Diefenbaker waited in the wings. He was busy building up his image as a prairie lawyer and politician willing to work for the small man. By the time he exploded on the national political scene in 1956 and won the leadership, he had, in Bruce Hutchison’s words, “learned how to play Diefenbaker.” He was already an oratorical genius on the stump and his consummate skills as an actor made him a natural on television. He had been playing the charismatic underdog for years, and now he would be a visionary.

Diefenbaker’s was a populist narrative for which there was no point in expending the effort of formal speech-writing or policymaking to capture attention. In this new consumption-driven era of “screen capitalism,” the political leader is a celebrity who sits at the centre of a web of affairs so complex as to be dehumanized; his ideas, turns of phrase, finances are all prepared for him by others. When celebrity becomes a form of communication, the leader does not need to be so explicit as to tirelessly outline his party platform and his plans for governance. All he needs is a vision. Diefenbaker had his “New National Policy.”
On April 25, 1957 John G. Diefenbaker stepped up to the podium of Toronto’s Massey Hall to deliver the opening speech of his first campaign as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. Knowing that the speech would reach a wide audience, his goal was to provide a phrase or slogan that would define the themes of the Progressive Conservative campaign and mark it with his personal signature—an indication of the style of thought and action that would characterize the future government. A successful performance on this occasion was particularly important for Diefenbaker, for despite his personal public appeal and his strong performance in Parliament he faced a widely respected and experienced political opponent in the current Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent, and a governing Liberal party that few pundits believed could ever be voted out of office.

To make his case against the Liberal government Diefenbaker had to engage the public in an unusually sophisticated response to political events based on an appreciation of an abstract and not quite palpable threat to democracy and a national way of life. He did so by harnessing the persuasive techniques of public relations and the new medium of television—a powerful combination that his public relations team knew could most effectively tell and sell a national narrative. The signature he settled on was the “New National Policy.” The choice harkened back to a discourse of Conservative nationalism that spoke of the antiquity of his party ideology, brought great ancestors back to life, and rediscovered the heroes who founded the nation. By making explicit his connection to great events and men of the past he guaranteed the ideas and values of the present. The speech was also carefully crafted to simultaneously carry his national vision and personal charisma into the homes of millions of Canadians. It was designed to contain all of the necessary elements of a made-for-television drama: one story with a single overriding plot; a dialectical structure which pitted protagonists against antagonists at every stage of the
historical process; an obstructed, manly hero who would do battle with putative threats to the nation which must be overcome in order to save it.\(^{399}\)

“My forefathers,” Diefenbaker proudly proclaimed, “came to ‘Muddy York’ 140 years ago. It was here, in the Province of Ontario that Sir John A. Macdonald, as Leader of this Party, laid the foundations of a free, great, and glorious nation stretching from sea to sea and northward to the arctic rim. The heritage of this party in making Confederation never dimmed or faded. It has an appointment with destiny to plan and build for a greater Canada.” On that night in Massey Hall, Diefenbaker asked his audience to view him as a nation-builder like Macdonald who would breathe new life into a corrupt model of government that prevented Canada from achieving its true national destiny:

The platform and New National Policy of the Conservative Party is based upon its abiding faith in freedom; in the maintenance of our institutions; in the assurance to all Canadians of the opportunity for industry, skill and enterprise and, in the resolute determination that the State shall be the servant of the people and that no Government should attempt to be their master. It will resist Communism from within and without Canada by every means in keeping with our conceptions of freedom of the individual. Can anyone doubt that Canada stands at a cross-road in her history? This is a time for greatness in planning for her future. Unity requires it—freedom demands it—mission now will ensure it. We have a choice—a road to greatness in faith and dedication—or the road to non-fulfillment of Canada’s destiny.\(^{400}\)

Diefenbaker’s “New National Policy” tapped a vein of latent ideological power. While he and his advisors could not have predicted just how effective the symbolism would be, they understood that they were invoking what was a venerable tradition in Canadian political rhetoric. They knew from their own experiences of Canadian culture that figures of speech referring to this tradition would be intelligible to the widest possible audience. They had grounds for perceiving that this set of signs and symbols was an appropriate language for explaining and justifying the use of political power.

\(^{399}\) For more on the emergence of made-for-TV politics in the decades following the Second World War, see Paul Rutherford, *When Television was Young: Primetime Canada, 1952-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 401-402.

For Diefenbaker and his advisors, the choice of the National Policy as a symbol was not simply a device for trade-marking a candidate. It was an authentic metaphor, descriptive of the ways in which they hoped to use political power and the kinds of struggles in which they wished to engage. Diefenbaker’s “New National Policy” was a complex and resonant symbol, a vivid and memorable set of hero-tales which justified action on the stage of historical conflict. Macdonald’s narrative lore suited the ideological needs of a nation in the process of transformation from a small, agrarian and semi-industrial dominion into a modern industrial and technocratic state. Developed almost entirely in the historical dimension, it revived forgotten pasts of partisan struggle, providing Diefenbaker and his team with a ready, marketable answer to the Liberal status quo.

The exchange of an old, provincial, agrarian frontier for a new frontier of industrial development championed by a strong federal government with a willingness to spend had been the central trope in Canadian political and historiographical debates since the 1870s. Seventy eight years before Diefenbaker’s address, Sir John A. Macdonald proclaimed a nationalistic policy which aimed to broaden the base of the Canadian economy and restore confidence in the westward expansion of the country. To that end, he placed a tariff on foreign manufactured goods that would protect Canadian manufacturers. The National Policy took on a broader meaning during the federal election of 1891, when Macdonald equated it with his other development policies: the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (1880s); western settlement (the Dominion Lands Act of 1872 and immigration policy); harbour development; and the subsidization of a fast steamship service to Europe and Asia to facilitate the export of Canadian products. Held up in stark contrast to the policy of reciprocity with the United States touted by the young Liberal leader, Wilfrid Laurier, Macdonald’s National Policy played on the

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xenophobic tendencies of a young country struggling for survival and recognition. As hyperbole would have it, Laurier, a French Canadian, was a cosmopolitan-type traitor whose continentalism would inevitably lead to the economic and political annexation of Canada to the United States. The symbolic language of the slogan, “The Old Flag, the Old Policy, the Old Leader,” with its timeless appeal to strong leadership, the racial/regional appeal encoded in the Red Ensign, and the nation-building myth of the National Policy, has been periodically used and revised by Conservative leaders ever since.  

Indeed throughout the first half of the twentieth century, trotting out Macdonald’s ghost in times of crisis had become somewhat of a Tory tradition. During his short tenure in office, from July 1920-December 1921, Arthur Meighen urged Canadians to return to “normalcy” after the disruptions of the First World War. For him, encouraging Canadians to turn away from the Progressive movements springing up in Western Canada meant looking “back… to old time sanity of thought and action” and the economic nationalism of Macdonald’s historic National Policy. Meighen’s ill-fated attempt at nation-building was followed by that of his successor, R.B. Bennett. In the darkest days of the Great Depression, Bennett called for a “re-writing” of the National Policy in a belated attempt to save his political skin. When faced with a severe economic and social crisis, it seemed only natural that Conservatives would grapple with modern concepts of a “managed economy” and “welfare state” by referring back to Macdonald’s tariffs and the building of the CPR. Unfortunately for the Tories, Bennett failed to deliver Canada

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403 Unfortunately for Meighen, the old Tory policy of protection failed to move farmers in the prairies while his support for conscription during the First World War won him few friends in Quebec and precipitated his political demise. Quoted taken from Michael Bliss, Right Honourable Men: The Descent of Canadian Politics from Macdonald to Mulroney (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1994), 100.
from the social and economic pitfalls of the Depression and retired to Britain, leaving the party divided between proponents of free enterprise and government intervention.  

Two decades later, Conservative leaders were still trying to pick up the pieces. When George Drew launched the federal election of 1953 with a call for a new National Policy “respecting the conservation and the use of our natural resources,” he banked on the possibility that a rediscovery of party “founding principles” would rescue it from the political doldrums. Desperate to find a way to differentiate the Conservative party from its Liberal adversaries, he invoked the myth of Macdonald and the National Policy in an effort to polarize political discourse along traditional partisan lines. In a number of speeches, Drew quoted directly from the first volume of Donald Creighton’s celebrated biography of Sir John A. Macdonald. He recognized Creighton for having re-discovered the legacy of Sir John A., and uncovering, “at long last, the secrets of Macdonald and his nation.” To Drew, the fate of postwar Canada rested on the revival of Conservative nationalism and the removal of sinister Liberal shibboleth.

Creighton’s homage to Macdonald was part of a renaissance in thinking about Canada’s first Prime Minister and the National Policy among the scholars, politicians and journalists of the day. The question of whether common economic goals and interests could unite Canadians was particularly prescient in the mid-1950s, when salient concerns over U.S. economic and cultural influence were coming to the fore. Although Canadians had been satisfied with the security and affluence which a close relationship with the United States provided in the decade immediately following the Second World War, unease about American power and influence began to provoke

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debates in the early 1950s about economic, social and cultural policy. In 1956, the Liberal-leaning businessman, Walter Gordon, addressed these issues in the preliminary findings of his Royal Commission on Economic Prospects. Gordon examined the relationship between foreign investment and Canadian independence and discovered what he viewed as an unsettling imbalance. The policies of Louis St. Laurent’s Liberals had made Canada attractive to foreign investors, which had the effect of raising the amount of foreign capital from 6.9 to 13.5 billion dollars between the years of 1939 and 1955. With the increase in foreign investment came an increase in trade, with exports to the United States growing from 42 per cent to 60 per cent and imports from 66 per cent to 73 per cent over the same time period. All this American investment amounted to what the journalist, Peter C. Newman celebrated in his book, Flame of Power, as having reduced “from generations to years the time required for Canadians to attain their current standard of living.” More Canadians than ever were basking in this new-found affluence, but critics were beginning to ask: at what cost?

Three years before the findings of the Gordon Report turned heads in the House of Commons and made headlines across Canada, a debate about the government’s role in regulating foreign investment and pursuing macroeconomic policy was being waged among thinkers who ran the country’s economy and dominated fields of academic research. The patchwork of

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408 Gordon first drafted an article for the governing Louis St Laurent Liberals “on the question of selling control of Canadian business enterprises to foreigners and the effect this could have on Canadian independence” in 1955. See Walter Gordon: A Political Memoir (Toronto: Formac Publishing Company, 1983), 59.

409 Leacy, Historical Statistics, Series G190; Urquhart and Buckley, Historical Statistics, 183.


411 For example, see PC MPs, Leon Balcer and E. Davie Fulton’s comments during debates in the House: Debates, 11 Apr. 1956, 2825-6; 2995.
essays that resulted from *Canada's Tomorrow*, a conference sponsored by the Canadian Westinghouse Company (the Canadian branch of an American firm) and held in Quebec City in November 1953, exemplifies the subtle fissures growing amongst establishment thinkers. Purportedly, the conference was “an attempt at sober prophecy into what Canada may and should become in the next fifty years.” Underlying that mandate was the question as to whether the nation should continue on its present course determined by the St Laurent government or whether people should begin to explore alternatives to the status quo.

Maurice Lamontagne, an economist from Laval University, was well-positioned to deliver a report on the status quo of Liberal economic and social policy in the mid-1950s. In the late 1950s he was a sympathetic bureaucrat concerned with the extent to which the federal government had become ensconced in economic and social affairs. He argued that businessmen relied too heavily on the state for ideas and sustenance. The only remedy for this sort of apathy was a hands-off approach to the government’s dealings with the private sector. To Lamontagne, the role of government in the nation’s economic affairs had historically swung like a pendulum; while war production and postwar reconstruction required direction from the state, in the increasingly affluent Canada of the 1950s, it was time to swing the other way towards “a situation of stable equilibrium.”

After examining the history of Canada’s economic policy, from Confederation through two World Wars and the Great Depression, Lamontagne concluded that pragmatism in social and economic policy had always been the norm. In his eyes, political ideologies in Canada had never

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413 G.P. Gilmour, ed., *Canada’s Tomorrow: Papers and Discussion Canada’s Tomorrow Conference, Quebec City, November 1953* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1954), v.
414 One decade later he was so entrenched within the Liberal elite that some considered him a contender for the leadership of the party. See Walter Gordon, in *Walter Gordon: A Political Memoir*, 75.
415 Maurice Lamontagne, “The Role of Government,” in *Canada’s Tomorrow*, 141.
had a “decisive influence in determining state responsibilities.” Rather, government intervention in the economy was historically determined by the relative favourable or unfavourable impact that “industrial revolutions” have on a country. At times when private initiative was unable to pick up the slack, given specific economic circumstances generated by a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the “western” world, the state was obliged to assume a dynamic role to jump start the economy. However, if an industrial revolution proved beneficial for a national economy and “the long-term prospective yield of new investment was high, and private initiative is in a position to provide a rapid rate of long-term economic growth,” a government must “take a laissez-faire attitude in the field.” In this case, “the role of government in respect to short-term stability would be relatively minor” because private investors could do the work of stimulating the economy. Despite the influence of Keynesian economics on post-war reconstruction, Lamontagne insisted that there was “no basic general trend pointing toward an increasing role of government in the same direction.” And in light of “rising and stable levels of income” in the 1950s, he predicted that calls for the extension “of government responsibilities in the field of social welfare” would be tempered and “long-term industrial development” would “be left to private initiative.” Lamontagne opened the way for an argument for a “functional” and flexible role for future federal government in the prosperous postwar period. He envisioned a complementary relationship existing between private enterprise and government—one that he believed had deep roots in Canada’s political history.

Lamontagne’s promotion of a “laissez-faire” economic policy was, in fact, a call to return to the state in which things were before the war when government had far less to do with the management of the economy. The economic historian, Ian Drummond, dubbed “macroeconomic

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416 Ibid., 121.
417 Ibid., 133.
418 Ibid., 142.
policy the conundrum of the fifties” for a reason; people were unsure as to how far government should concern itself with levels of unemployment, inflation, and the balance of payments.419 Macroeconomic management was new for postwar governments in Canada, the U.S., and in Europe.420 The transition between popular economics of the early twentieth century and technocratic management of the economy was difficult to stomach for people like Lamontagne, who were wary of what they viewed as increasingly superfluous government intervention. As debates continued in Canada over the question of foreign investment and economic sovereignty, people became polarized over whether or not the government should scale intervention back to pre-war levels and encourage at least a balanced role for private enterprise, or whether a New National Policy of high tariffs and government-directed projects should be implemented.

Those who were advocates of government restraint were also supporters of a “tight money” policy—high taxes, tight credit, large surpluses—designed to combat the threat of inflation. In the postwar period, Canada shared a common experience of North Atlantic countries with regard to the issue of inflation. Economists propounded their views on its causes and remedies; financial and government authorities dilated on its dread consequences; labour leaders rose to challenge allegations of the role of wage increases in the inflationary process and the public at large was being educated as to its evils.421 For the Liberals and the leading bureaucrats who shaped their economic policy, it was crucial that the government return the economic system to “normalcy,” and re-establish peacetime patterns of supply and demand. It was also thought that the strong tendency was for inflation and the balance of payments to deteriorate

421 For instance, an ad in The Toronto Star posted on 12 November 1959 informed readers that “a sound dollar means a better life for you. Give your Active Support to the fight against inflation.” See also Bothwell et. al., Canada since 1945, 16.
whenever the economy had shown any sign of acceleration in the rate of growth. The Finance Committee of the Canadian Senate held an inquiry into its dangers, and a parade of witnesses from nearly every major economic group in Canada reflected on the “inflation” question. All this activity was remarkable considering that, as a number of economists including Harvey Perry, the Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Tax Foundation, argued at the time, “agreement is almost unanimous that there is no inflationary movement at present and that the risks are almost entirely latent.” To Perry, the fear could be chalked up to a “psychology of inflation” that existed on both sides of the 49th parallel, “amounting almost to a phobia.”

Not all Liberals shared in this Depression-era mentality, however. While fiscal conservatives like Lamontagne, Walter Harris, St Laurent’s Minister of Finance, and others fought to balance the books and scale back government intervention in the economy, advocates of economic nationalism and the expansion of the welfare state such as Walter Gordon and Tom Kent were beginning to be heard. The split within Liberal ranks is also evident in the essay written by a C.D. Howe acolyte, Maxwell Weir Mackenzie, for Canada’s Tomorrow.

Although he began his career in the private sector, Mackenzie became a civil servant in the early 1950s, taking up such key positions as Deputy Minister of Defence Production and Deputy Minister of Trade and Commerce. Entitled “Canada’s Natural Resources,” his contribution to the conference, with its emphasis on government-led economic expansion, stands out in stark contrast to that of Lamontagne’s. In Mackenzie’s eyes, Canada’s development as a political entity could be seen through the lens of Macdonald’s National Policy—the protective tariffs, the

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423 There is running correspondence between Liberal, fiscal conservatives such Grant Dexter, Bruce Hutchison, and Senator Thomas Crerar in the Grant Dexter collection which reveals a growing schism within the Liberal party over the problem of economic and social reform. See the Grant Dexter Fonds, Queen’s University Archives, Collection 2142, Box 7 Folder 45. See also, Tom Kent, A Public Purpose (Montreal-Kingston: Queen’s-McGill University Press, 1988), esp. Part 1: “Getting Defeated,” pp. 3-31.
424 For more on Mackenzie’s “vision” of postwar reconstruction, see “Reconversion from Wartime to Peacetime Economy,” in Canada and the World Tomorrow: Addresses Given at the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs, August 19 to 26, 1944, Violet Anderson, ed. (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1944), 77.
building of the trans-continental railway and the opening of the west. “Looking to our future development,” Mackenzie argued, “a network throughout the country by which energy can be transported, whether by the interconnection of electrical systems, pipelines, or any other form, will work in the same direction.” 425 The next national project should thus establish a trans-continental power grid which would unite the provinces from east to west. Although short-term benefits could be derived from building an alternative route that might ship such resources more cheaply to the U.S., Mackenzie argued that the federal government should look “to the long-range values of the country as a whole and at other measures that we have financed in the past and that are now basic to our structure.” 426

In order for this to happen, the federal government would have to take risks with public money. Mackenzie noted that although Macdonald’s trans-continental railroad was “considered by many at the time to as an uneconomic venture, but without the increased accessibility to areas of our country that it brought, we would not have Canada as we know it today.” 427 The world was just beginning to take notice of Canada and its wealth of resources. “The American press,” Mackenzie said, “has recently discovered Canada and talks of our resources in the most glowing terms.” “Even the sober-minded London Economist describes what is going on in Canada as ‘… exciting and impressive as any achievement in industrial civilization.’” 428 What Canada required for the future, he argued, was “people who have the vision, the opportunity and the incentive to pioneer new ventures.” Although Canada had “passed through what is generally thought of as the pioneering stage in this country… we still have a lot of pioneering to do in the sense of big risk-taking, opening up new territory and establishing new industrial ventures.” 428 By pursuing a flexible and “imaginative immigration policy”— something C.D. Howe favoured—and opening

425 Maxwell Weir Mackenzie “Canada’s Natural Resources,” in Canada’s Tomorrow, 42.
426 Ibid., 43.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid., 54.
up “new territory,” Mackenzie believed that Canada could pursue “a well-planned expansion of the economy which would provide security for the future.”

Making connections between the nature of the economic order and a moral commitment to safeguard national sovereignty was becoming a trend among certain circles. Thinkers like Mackenzie were beginning to turn away from the tight-money, technocratic vision of federal economic and social policy and towards what was called an “expansive” economic policy—a non-Marxist, democratic and egalitarian solution to the brutal legacy of the Victorian era’s laissez-faire capitalism. So-called “progressive” ideas like these were not limited to Canada; by 1955, John Kenneth Galbraith had already written a draft of *The Affluent Society*, a book that soon became the bible of American liberalism with its calls for economic expansion that would fund a revolution of the public sector. To Galbraith, “value-neutral” economics alone could not make America great: realizing the purpose of economic activity in a democratic society required citizens to share a public commitment, “to consider [the nation’s] goals, to reflect on its pursuit of happiness and harmony and its success in expelling pain, tensions, sorrow and the ubiquitous curse of ignorance.” Ideas like these signalled a growing sense of obligation on the part a particular set of intellectuals and politicians of developed democracies to ensure at least a lowest common denominator level of care for the poor. For them, investing in social capital—in welfare programs, education, and health care—would pay dividends in terms of productivity within the realms of science, technology and industry. To old school conservatives hoping to restore the status quo ante bellum, the added responsibility and macro-management that policies like these entailed must have resembled an ill-begotten can of worms. Not so for a new generation of leaders willing to take risks in order to meet the challenge of a virulent Soviet

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429 Ibid.
Communism. In macroeconomic management they saw “new frontiers” of possibility worthy of exploration.\footnote{For more on roots of Kennedy and Johnson’s “great society,” see Parker, \textit{John Kenneth Galbraith}, esp. Chapter 14: Kennedy, Sputnik, and “Liberal Growthmanship,” pp. 311-337.}

The idea of an expansive, nation-building economic policy had deep, romantic roots in Canadian political discourse. At a time when St Laurent’s Liberal government was being chided for pandering to American investors and pushing a continentalist agenda, it seemed only natural that talk of a New National Policy would begin to ring in people’s ears. Unfortunately for the Liberals, the balance of power within the upper echelons of the party was such that the pre-war, conservative dedication to tight-money and balanced books could not be wrested from the agenda.\footnote{J.W. Pickersgill, \textit{My Years with Louis St. Laurent: A Political Memoir} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); Tom Kent, \textit{A Public Purpose: An Experience of Liberal Opposition and Canadian Government} (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), pp. 123-125.} The opposite was true of the Progressive Conservative party, which had elected John G. Diefenbaker as its leader in 1956. Having run on an anti-establishment ticket, Diefenbaker was forced by necessity to expel his more conservative Bay Street enemies from the inner circle of the party and instead relied on outsiders who were plugged in to the latest trends in social, economic and political thought.\footnote{Peter Stursberg Interview with Ellen Fairclough, Peter Stursberg Fonds, 9 March 1973: LAC MG/D78 Vol. 14.}

One such was Merril Menzies, who is credited as being the architect of Diefenbaker’s New National Policy.\footnote{See John G. Diefenbaker, \textit{One Canada}, Vol. 2, pp. 12-13; Peter Stursberg, \textit{Diefenbaker: Leadership Gained}, pp. 51-52; Denis Smith, \textit{Rogue Tory}, pp. 224-227.} Menzies was not a run-of-the mill Tory partisan; he had worked in the office of a Liberal cabinet minister, Stuart Garson, Minister of Justice for Louis St Laurent, from 1952-1954. Yet while he got along with Garson, Menzies found that “the consensus view or establishment view [among the Liberal elite] simply was not open to question, and so it was evident to me within a year that I would not be staying long.”\footnote{Peter Stursberg Interview with Merril Menzies, 24 January 1974.} Alternatively, he read for a Ph.D. at the London School of Economics and wrote a dissertation entitled, \textit{The Canadian Wheat}
Board and the International Wheat Trade, a project that would form the basis of his thought on the role of government in Canadian social and economic affairs. Soon after returning to his home in North Vancouver in the summer of 1956, Menzies was asked by his brother-in-law, Dr. Glen Green, to prepare an essay for him on the direction that the Progressive Conservative party should take in forming its platform for the next federal election. Green was so impressed by the essay that he sent it straight to Diefenbaker. According to Menzies, after Diefenbaker won the leadership, the PC Party platform formulated by the “conservative” members of the major policy committee during the convention was “filed away” and never picked up again. Instead, Diefenbaker hired Menzies on as his economic advisor and ideas man. It was Menzies who helped him draft a new “Manifesto”—a platform and policy for the Progressive Conservative party that would “build on its abiding beliefs in… the sovereign independence of Canada both political and economic—through national development.”

Underlying the rhetoric used in the campaigns Diefenbaker waged in 1957 and 1958 is a history of Canada in which Conservatives and Liberals are at constant war with one another. It was out of the dialectical interchange between the two ideological foes that Macdonald’s National Policy had been fashioned—a battle that Menzies believed could and should be reproduced in the postwar period. “From Confederation,” he argued, “the Liberal and Conservative parties assumed two broadly opposing attitudes towards the role of government in national economic growth.” According to Menzies, “the Liberals under Alexander Mackenzie believed in and followed a passive and negative policy—a policy of laissez-faire.” In contrast,

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“Conservatives under Macdonald believed in and pursued positive policies.” When he built the Canadian Pacific Railway, Macdonald “built a nation”:

He established the historic goals of national policy of Canada. He knew instinctively that his goal of an economically independent and viable state could not be realized except by positive—even heroic—government action to ensure the establishment and development of east-west lines of communication and trade, and the expansion and protection of a domestic market by means of energetic immigration, settlement and tariff policies.440

What Menzies saw before him was a new age of prosperity and increasing leisure. He saw a new Canada. But when Menzies asked himself the question—what would be the substance of this new Canada and what are we doing to realize it?—he came up blank.

Menzies had no complaints about the Liberal Minister of Trade and Commerce, C.D. Howe, his handling of the war-time economy, or the efforts he had made to convert it to peace-time circumstances with a minimum of dislocation and disruption.441 He placed the blame for the downward spiral of the 1950s at the feet of both the Grits and the Tories. Menzies’ first quarrel was with the intermarriage of civil servants, academics and conservative Liberal cabinet ministers—all of whom looked back fondly on the tight-money “laissez-faire” economics of the interwar years. As Lamontagne had predicted, the Liberal government planned to carry out its “Keynesian” mandate under circumstances heavily determined by the goals of private enterprise and foreign American investment. St. Laurent’s Liberal party might have taken on large, national projects like the construction of the St Lawrence Seaway in 1954 and proposed the building of a Trans-Canada Pipeline in 1956, but, to Menzies, “it did not in fact provide us with what I would call the leadership in terms of broad economic and social objectives which would prepare us for what the future was bound to bring.” Unfortunately, the Opposition “provided literally no alternative at that time.” The ineffectiveness of Progressive Conservative party in the days of George Drew had insured that it had little credibility as an alternative government,

441 Robert Bothwell Interview with Merril Menzies, 15 November 1976: University of Toronto Archives, B1979-005/002.
reinforcing a profoundly held consensus that the government policy was not only right but that it was the only possible policy.\(^{442}\)

Menzies shared with Walter Gordon and Max Mackenzie the belief that, under its current management, the Liberal party did not understand that “the only alternative to positive government was the loss of economic independence and effective sovereignty—that Canada would inevitably become a backwater colony producing raw materials for the industrial colossus of the United States.”\(^{443}\) His way out of the dilemma was to fight to restore nationalistic ideas about the public agenda and to press the macro-management of the economy and its underlying theory into the service of a more expansive and hopeful Keynesian worldview. Menzies’ paper was a revisionist history of the Liberal party which described private and foreign capital as the chief determinant in the shape and direction of economic and national development.\(^{444}\) In contrast, John A. Macdonald’s Conservatives are viewed as having pursued a different agenda. Macdonald had apparently understood that “economic policy should not be fragmented and calculated in terms of short-term gain.” Rather, “it should be national in focus and be conceived in relation to long term, but flexible, objectives; it should be expansionary to deal with the immediate problems of unemployment; it should do something about the overvalued Canadian dollar to help exporters, whether in agriculture, forestry or industry.” “Sir John A Macdonald… had a long term vision of Canada and built for the next generation.” But Menzies argued that “after WWI this kind of imagination seemed to be at a premium.” “It is true,” he conceded, “that governments in the 20s lived a precarious existence. In the 30s, the whole world lived a

\(^{442}\) Peter Stursberg Interview with Merril Menzies, 24 January 1974: LAC MG 31/D78/Vol. 15.

\(^{443}\) Menzies discussed Mackenzie’s essay in *Canada Tomorrow* and Gordon’s preliminary report on Canada’s economic prospects (released in 1956) in his interview with Stursberg.

\(^{444}\) Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn’s biography of C.D. Howe clearly shows the extent to which Howe’s macro policies were nationalistic, injections of capital designed both to bolster the economy and to define and create intra-Canadian economic links. What Menzies proposed, in fact, was another “big” project in the tradition of Howe’s policies. His policy was thus a logical continuation of the policies of the Liberals—a version of the story that did not suit his partisan narrative. See Bothwell and Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: a Biography* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), esp. Ch. 16 “A Businessmen’s Country,” pp. 282.
precarious existence, and then, of course, the ‘40s determined very clearly what had to be done as far as the Canadian government was concerned, and it was well done.” But this was a brave new postwar era which “was wide open again to develop a philosophy of positive government for Canadian development. And this had not been done. And I felt very strongly that it would take Mr. Diefenbaker to make this tremendous break with the status quo.”

Menzies had reason to believe that Diefenbaker was the only Tory politician who could take on this New National Policy. The new leader was being advised by a brains trust of left-wing Tories from the prairies, including the likes of Alvin Hamilton, Gordon Churchill, and Roy Faibish, whose unique regional perspective gave them an edge over the central Canadian Bay Street establishment. Hamilton, in particular, the former PC leader from Saskatchewan and stalwart Diefenbaker supporter, had long been known for his folksy political style and obsession with an integrated vision of regional and national development. Since 1948, he had been touting what he called “a positive development doctrine on expansion and Canadianism and nationalism.”

It was Hamilton, along with Erik Nielsen, later a PC Member of Parliament from the Yukon, who drafted the resource policy of the party during the leadership convention of 1948, providing George Drew with talking points that he would use on national development for the next eight years. According to Roy Faibish, who served as Hamilton’s private secretary from 1957-1958, his boss had been in conversation with the “best minds of the country”—experts like geologist J.C. Sproule and Lorne Gray of Atomic Energy—in his bid to develop a workable policy of Northern Development. In an interview with journalist, Peter Stursberg,

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445 Peter Stursberg Interview with Merril Menzies, 24 January 1974; LAC MG 31/D78/Vol. 15.
Faibish recalled visiting Hamilton at the House of Commons weeks after the electoral victory of 1957 and just days after he was awarded the portfolio of Minister of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources:

There was a big map on Alvin’s wall, and he started at Newfoundland “Here’s the Hamilton River, here’s the coal of Cape Breton, here’s the iron ore of Baffin Island, here’s the pulp and paper here that needs energy” and he went right across Canada. Here’s the Nelson River power development.” And none of these existed. And he went across and he said, “Now, here’s the Columbia River and up here in the Yukon is the Taku, the mightiest of them all. And I want to join this whole complex of systems together to make a great national energy grid, because in the end there is more than single thing is going to determine whether we’re going to be greater and more powerful nation than the United States.449

Hamilton’s grand master plan put meat on the bones of Menzies’ theoretical rendering of resource development. While Menzies followed the Diefenbakers across Canada in trains, planes, and automobiles during the federal elections of 1957-1958, writing speeches and advising “the Chief” on economic matters that escaped him, Hamilton and Faibish were at National Headquarters brainstorming and polishing the “vision” and sending out speeches in long-form on via telegram.450 Diefenbaker’s advisors were given no notification as to whether or not he would use their material. “You never knew what he was going to do, even when he had the stuff in front of him.” But, as Faibish recalled, “when we listened to Diefenbaker on the radio and started to hear ourselves talking… we were pretty happy.”451

Diefenbaker’s campaign slogan expressed in symbolic shorthand a fresh approach to the use of government power. His “New National Policy” promised to reject the Liberal party’s conservative assessment of Canadian economic resources and political strength. It intended to make full use of the tremendous aggregation of political and economic power that had been centred in the federal government since the Second World War. Three aspects of the new Progressive Conservative agenda were of particular importance: the revival of strong and

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charismatic leadership, national development, and the promotion of “one unhyphenated Canada.”

The first of these was of Diefenbaker’s deepest concern. Since the death of Sir John A. Macdonald, the Conservative party had failed to contain the strains on party unity and resolve internal conflicts over national identity. It had been divided by fights among Catholics and Protestants, the French and the English, Ontario and Quebec, and, in the early days of Keynes, between fiscal conservatives and proponents of social and economic reform. As the Liberals’ hold on political power began to falter in the mid-1950s, the need for an effective Conservative leader to provide party cohesion and find a way to re-occupy the centre of mainstream political discourse was stronger than ever. After the resignation of George Drew, W.R. Graham, a history Professor at the University of Saskatoon with an obvious Conservative bias, contended that it was “time that the Progressive Conservative party decide whether the theme [of the National Policy] can be used as skilfully and to as good effect as Sir John used it.” Someone with the same personal magnetism and charm of Macdonald had to be found to make the connection between the needs and wants of postwar Canada and “progressive” Conservative nationalism. Someone had to reinvigorate and unite the Progressive Conservative party behind a tried and true partisan cause. Because “the attractiveness and historic legitimacy of the vision which lies back of it,” Graham insisted, “is very strong.” So too, he suggested, was the power of Macdonald’s image.

Diefenbaker’s public relations guru, Allister Grosart, did not need a professor to lecture him on the importance of a charismatic leader to a successful election campaign. As we have

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seen, he understood something that few Liberals comprehended: large pockets of Canada no longer cared as much about their local chieftains or even their parties. In the postwar era, voters began to articulate their desires through the medium of the leader.\textsuperscript{455} It is for this reason that Grosart played down the “Conservative” label and played up the image of John G. Diefenbaker. Portraying Diefenbaker as a dynamic and virile nation-builder would not only serve as a foil to that of old “Uncle Louis” and the remote and impersonal Lester B. Pearson, it would also deflect the “Bay Street” image that the Liberals had previously made stick to the Tory party.\textsuperscript{456} “We had to tie the elements together,” he recalled of the Diefenbaker campaign strategy: “We had to make people realize this wasn’t the same old bunch they’d voted against in every election since 1935. Who better to convey this than Diefenbaker, the lone wolf? We had to convey the significance of Liberal arrogance. Who better to do it than Diefenbaker, the parliamentarian, friend of the little man, the lawyer who left his wife’s sickbed to fly to B.C. to defend a workingman?”\textsuperscript{457} Coined by Dalton Camp, Grosart’s second-in-command, the slogan “It’s Time for a Diefenbaker Government” perfectly encapsulated the shift from party to personality that marked a turn in Canadian federal politics towards the image craft of a modern political campaign.\textsuperscript{458}

Diefenbaker was not just a pawn in Grosart’s political game. He possessed a mix of shrewd political instinct and self-aggrandizement that drew him naturally to the idea of waging a new kind of campaign.\textsuperscript{459} In order to effectively compete with Louis St. Laurent in 1957 and Lester B. Pearson in 1958, two Liberal leaders who had already cultivated public personas of

\textsuperscript{455} Interview with Pat MacAdam on 19 October 2006; Brian Mulroney and Senator Lowell Murray also elaborated on this point during interviews with me on 10 January and 15 February 2007, respectively.

\textsuperscript{456} The political analyst, John Duffy, argues that in 1958, “Dief emerged as the free world’s first political superstar.” Diefenbaker introduced to Canada “the first modern election campaign.” John Duffy, \textit{Fights of Our Lives} (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2003), 226; See also Stursberg Interview of Grosart 5 December 1972: LAC MG 32/C 65.


\textsuperscript{458} Stursberg Interview of Dalton Camp, 13 June 1975.

their own, Diefenbaker fashioned himself in the image of a successful politician with whom
Canadians were already familiar: Sir John A. Macdonald. Long before he met Grosart,
Diefenbaker had been practising to take on the role. He liked to boast that the two nation-
builders shared similar Scottish roots; Macdonald’s parents had lived some fifty miles from his
maternal grandmother and grandfather’s home in the Highlands of Scotland. Some time in his
early political career, Diefenbaker learned that while speaking in the House, “Macdonald used to
irritate the Opposition with his pointing finger.” As both a defence lawyer and
parliamentarian, he used the same trick to great effect. Diefenbaker had always viewed
Macdonald as a progressive who, like him, purportedly waged constant war not only against
laissez-faire Liberalism but also against the more conservative elements of the party.
“Conservatives in Toronto and Montreal,” he contended, “were appalled at the name change
from Conservative to Progressive Conservative in the Bracken years. They adopted much the
same attitude to the change of name that their forebears did during the days of Macdonald,
whenever he took a stand it was not in keeping with their concept of Toryism.”
Like Macdonald, Diefenbaker would be a populist. In a postwar era of technocratic management and
big government, he would fashion himself as “a proven champion of the common people.”
Like Macdonald, he would unite the Progressive Conservative party and attract the broadest
swath of voters possible by touting a nationalist, pan-Canadian vision. Like Macdonald, he
would view Canada as standing on the edge of a “frontier,” facing a new world of vast potential
for either unlimited progress or unmitigated disaster.

460 Diefenbaker, One Canada, Vol. 1, 3.
462 See Garret Wilson and Kevin Charles Wilson, Diefenbaker for the Defence (Toronto: Lorimer, 1988). See also
463 Stursberg Interview with John Diefenbaker, 14 January 1968.
464 “Vote For Diefenbaker: A Proven Champion of the Common People,” Leadership Campaign 1948, Diefenbaker
Centre Images.
Throughout his career Diefenbaker made Macdonald’s narrative his own. His obsession was as much sentimental as it was calculated to win votes. “John Diefenbaker,” the O’Brien public relations agency advised, was “the living symbol of Macdonald’s achievements for the ordinary Canadian citizen”: “Insofar as the objective of the campaign is to win the largest possible number of votes for the Conservative party from every political segment of the electorate, it would be folly to ignore this personal symbolism in planning overall campaign strategy.” Indeed, from 1957 onwards, memory, history and narrative would intersect in the political personas of John A. Macdonald and John G. Diefenbaker. The “Two Great Conservatives: Sir JOHN A. and the Rt. Hon. JOHN D” were side-by-side, on every placard. After his landslide victory, Maclean’s published the “exclusive album” of Diefenbaker’s prized collection of Macdonald memorabilia, complete with photos of Sir John A.’s spring blotter and inkwell and a true-to-life plaster silhouette of Canada’s first Conservative leader. Peter Newman gushed about the “natural parallel” and “strong similarity between the two Tory leaders.” One decade later, back in the Opposition, Diefenbaker would record an album for RCA Victor’s Canada-International label, titled, “I am Canadian.” The entire second side of the album was dedicated to anecdotes about Sir John A.

Diefenbaker’s self-centred personality lent itself well to a leadership-focused campaign, but all evidence suggests that he also pursued the new politics of image craft out of necessity. As John Meisel and others have shown, the Diefenbaker camp lacked connections within the establishment of the Progressive Conservative party, among topflight civil servants and members

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of the intelligentsia. Grosart wagered that by cultivating Diefenbaker’s image as a nation-building populist and focusing on “personal identification” or what was really “the ad term for product identification,” they could go over the heads of movers and shakers and deliver their message directly to the people. After one year in power, public relations experts were warning Diefenbaker that “the majority of new Conservative ministers—excepting only a handful of seasoned veterans” had “insufficient time to make any lasting personal impact upon the electorate as a whole.” In their opinion, most new Cabinet Ministers “had to win their governmental spurs as far as the general public is concerned.” Grosart concurred in a memo to Diefenbaker in which he argued that running an effective campaign at the grassroots level, especially in regions where the PC party machine was weak, required that sharp focus be put on “the personality, record and achievements of John Diefenbaker.” Mindful of Macdonald’s famous ballyhoo of 1891, which trumpeted “the old leader” and his “old [National] policy,” the spotlight would shine on one man and one slogan. In order to streamline operations, a “Diefenbaker campaign leader” would be “identified in each province” as “a rallying and information point.” Just as “Ike and Dick” clubs collected over 250,000 Republican members across the United States in the run-up to the federal election of 1952, so “Diefenbaker Clubs” would spontaneously spring up across Canada. “Follow John” buttons, knitting patterns,

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bumper stickers, and little plastic footprints would be affixed to cars and club houses. Diefenbaker’s image, Grosart argued, would function as “a bulwark against the constant temptation to change course with each new headline, each new rumour, each new impelling argument.”

By waging an image-focused campaign, Grosart believed that the Progressive Conservative party’s feeble machine could quickly streamline its haphazard national operations and fashion Diefenbaker’s political persona into a successful commercial product in the process. But the Diefenbaker team would need more than image craft to beat the Liberals, whose provincial organizations were highly skilled in the subtle art of patronage. After years of failure, infighting, and docility conditioned by repeated defeat the federal Conservative party had turned inward, leaving the provinces to fend for themselves. As Dalton Camp, Diefenbaker’s public relations man from the Maritimes put it: “the organization was obsessed with Ontario; it was the dead centre of its universe, with the Maritimes and the West loosely flapping hinges. As for Quebec, it was discussed only as an eternally unresolvable problem.” By the time Diefenbaker won the leadership in 1956, however, the regional tide had turned. He inherited the party machines of Robert Stanfield in Nova Scotia and Hugh John Flemming in New Brunswick, whose early victories in 1952 and 1956 were viewed as national omens. More importantly, at least from an electoral standpoint, Diefenbaker had won the favour of Ontario’s Premier, Leslie Frost. It was well-known that Frost hated George Drew and was embarrassed by the conspicuous failures of the federal branch of the party. According to the historian Denis Smith, despite certain reservations about Diefenbaker’s character, “Old Man Ontario” decided to “ride the tide


\[475\] Camp, Gentlemen, Players and Politicians, 104; Smith, Rogue Tory, p. 200;
of Diefenbaker’s popularity” and put his considerable provincial organization at Diefenbaker’s disposal.476 Camp observed at the time that the provincial party machines took on the “sleek and shining allure of bandwagons.”477 Toryism was coming back into fashion and Diefenbaker reaped the benefits.478

Support from the provinces came at a price that Diefenbaker and his team were willing to pay. After all, Churchill, Hamilton, Menzies, and Faibish had grown up outside of central Canada and built their careers speaking to and from the margins. The “New National Policy” that they envisioned was founded on the premise that the purpose of economic activity should be to achieve social, democratic and political goals that would ensure the “equalization of opportunity in all parts of Canada.”479 St. Laurent’s federal-provincial tax abatement agreement might have entrenched the concept of equalization payments, creating instruments that eased inequalities amongst so called “have” and “have-not” provinces, but Diefenbaker’s team believed that the Liberals had not gotten to the root of the problem.480 They argued that compensating poorer provinces merely papered over deeply entrenched, historic economic disparities. In their collective opinion, investing in regional development and expanding the economy was a more equitable and long-term solution.481

The unique regional perspective of the Diefenbaker team, and the focus it placed on moral imperatives of regional economic development was shared by their leader, who could relate to those living on the margins. He was born in the rural village of Neustadt, in south-

476 “Ontario Switches Support to Progressive Conservative Party,” Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, 27 April 1957; See also, John G. Diefenbaker, One Canada, Vol. 2, 7; Dalton Camp, Gentlemen, Players and Politicians, 181.
477 Camp held a grudge against Diefenbaker for his failure to acknowledge the contribution made by the provinces to his victories in 1957-8. See Dalton Camp, Gentlemen, Players and Politicians, pp. 227-229.
western Ontario in September 1895. Five years later the family relocated to Toronto, during which time financial troubles, together with the relentless teasing over the Germanic origins of his last name, took their toll on the ego of young John. Much to the boy’s relief, the Diefenbakers soon moved west to the portion of the Northwest Territories which would soon become the province of Saskatchewan in 1903. The small wooden homestead and schoolhouse on the prairies that his family called home is proudly illustrated in the frontispiece of the second volume of Diefenbaker’s memoirs, *One Canada.*

In his memoirs, Diefenbaker boasts of the western heritage of rebellion and dissent that he became heir to by association, growing up as he did in the locale of Riel’s 1885 Rebellion. To this day the claim that Gabriel Dumont, the famous Métis “buffalo hunter” and “military genius,” would visit the Diefenbaker homestead “now and then” to show John and his younger brother Elmer “some examples of his marksmanship” has yet to be corroborated. Yet as Preston Manning, the former leader of the Reform Party contends, Diefenbaker’s legacy as an “anti-establishment Tory” and prairie populist should be viewed squarely “in the context of Western, third party rebellion.” Manning, whose father was Ernest Manning, leader of the right-wing Social Credit party of Alberta from 1943-1968, argues that the postwar period as a time for the mantra of provincial rights:

> During times of peace and prosperity power flows out in a big Confederation to the regions. You can push the envelope without blowing something out… particularly in our Confederation. But during times of crisis… war and economic collapse… it sinks back into the middle. The Great Depression and the War…the evolution of the welfare state… was part and parcel of this central control. Even free enterprisers who would have fought that to the death agreed that this had to be done. That factor is flowing in there with the end of the war and the coming of more prosperity you start to have the power flowing out.

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As a proponent of decentralization, Manning believes that the best a federal politician can do is assent to the ebb and flow of power to and from the provinces. Like John A. Macdonald who “closed the gap in the nineteenth century” and Mackenzie King who “absorbed the Progressive Parties in the middle of the twentieth,” he suggests that Diefenbaker discovered a way to catch the postwar wave of provincial angst. Quick to avoid giving Diefenbaker the credit of being original thinker, Manning maintains he “was like a fish in the water,” which was “moved by the same forces that were moving other people.” Still, he concedes that Diefenbaker’s ability to “absorb and embody the extremes of the west was part of his initial success. He was an outsider who could speak the language of the West.”

Diefenbaker’s idea of federalism reflected his experiences living on the margins but it was also inspired by a concept of pan-Canadian unity which he conceived as originating with the leadership of Macdonald. With the National Policy he believed Sir John had bestowed upon the young Dominion a sense of national purpose, a nation-building enterprise that both literally and figuratively united Canada’s disparate provinces. As Donald Creighton put it in *Dominion of the North*—his first attempt at revising Macdonald’s legacy: “In the early 1880s, the drive and purpose of Macdonald’s nationalism were clearly apparent. With a new government, a new series of national enterprises and a new wave of prosperity, the Dominion stood at the zenith. It was superb with promise and achievement. It looked confidently into the future.”

Diefenbaker shared in Creighton’s nostalgia for the glories of late Victorian Conservatism and the conviction that they had been long been ignored by scholars of Canadian history. On every stump from which he spoke, and in every television and radio address he delivered, Diefenbaker invited Canadians to recover a version of their country’s history that had been shrouded by twenty-two years of Liberal rule. For Diefenbaker and his team, the “New

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487 Interview with Preston Manning, 2 November 2006.
“National Policy” became a resonant symbol, a model, and a tool designed to justify action on the stage of historical conflict. It suggested a particular way to be, act, and see one’s self—as a citizen and a patriot. The tribal nature of Diefenbaker’s partisan identity—the ideas about citizenship and the sense of the political and moral self that it denoted—was meant to infuse the act of voting with the kind of fervour that required people to think outside of their parochial interests for what they considered to be the greater public good.\textsuperscript{489} The New National Policy revealed a real historical and moral imperative behind the partisan battle between Grits and Tories. It was a nationalist narrative which constituted the patriot, hailed the individual as citizen, and promoted particular moods and policies for the purpose of creating a quasi-religious dialectic between nation and self that is the stuff of modern nationalism.\textsuperscript{490} As Allister Grosart was known to say, “it was the bible which provided the theme for our victorious campaign” because “where there is no vision, the people perish.”\textsuperscript{491}

Critics and supporters alike have referred to Diefenbaker’s “vision” of national development as mythical for a reason.\textsuperscript{492} The rhetoric in which it is couched is metaphorical and suggestive rather than ideological and analytical. It is a narrative that tells of a relation of cause-and-effect, one that resembles a theory of history more than a blueprint for public policy. Diefenbaker’s narrative was designed to disarm critical analysis because it conformed to the structures and traditions of storytelling and the clichés of historical memory.\textsuperscript{493} “From Confederation,” Diefenbaker argued—using Menzies’ words — “the Liberal and Conservative

\textsuperscript{489} In \textit{Society Must be Defended} (New York: Picador, 1997) pp. 155, 171. Michel Foucault argues that after the Middle Ages, war can be understood less as the divine right of a sovereign and more as the hidden power that divides societies and thus influences political decisions.

\textsuperscript{490} Benedict Anderson discusses the dialectic between nation and self out of which “imagined” identities emerge in \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism} (New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 4-6.

\textsuperscript{491} \textit{Marketing}, 27 June 1958.


\textsuperscript{493} I take my cue here from Richard Slotkin, who examines the ways in which the frontier myth influenced American culture and politics. See Slotkin, \textit{Gunfighter Nation}, 6.
Parties assumed two broadly opposing attitudes towards the role of government in national economic growth.” Alexander Mackenzie and his sinful band of Liberals “believed in and followed a passive and negative policy—a policy of *laissez faire*” which would lead Canadians down a path towards annexation. Only the great “Sir John A. Macdonald… knew instinctively that his goal of an economically independent and viable state could not be realized except by positive—even heroic—government action.”

“It was Sir John A. Macdonald, Leader of this Party,” Diefenbaker said, “who laid the foundation of a free, great and glorious nation stretching from sea to sea and northward to the arctic rim.” And it was only the Progressive Conservative Party with Diefenbaker as its new nation-building leader that had “an appointment with destiny to plan and build for a greater Canada.” By identifying his political program with such a venerable tradition, Diefenbaker revealed his national vision as a product of nature rather than a product of history.

Those who were persuaded to identify with Diefenbaker’s heroic political scenario found that it entailed more than a simple affiliation with a version of Canadian history, the campaign or even the incoming Progressive Conservative government. Its central purpose was to summon the nation as a whole to undertake (or at least support) a heroic engagement in nation-building.

“Canadians,” he implored, “realize your opportunities: our blueprint for national development is only the beginning. The future Programme for the next five to seven years under a Progressive Conservative Government is one that is calculated to give Canadians, motivated by a desire to serve, a lift in heart, Faith in Canada’s Future, Faith in her Destiny.”

The symbolism of the New National Policy set the terms in which Diefenbaker would seek public consent to and participation in its mission of “National Development.” It shaped the language through which his

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494 “Notes of a Speech by John Diefenbaker, 1957”: JGDP MG 01/X11/F/162.
495 “Notes of a Speech to be delivered at Massey Hall, Toronto, April 25th, 1957, at 8:30 p.m. by John Diefenbaker”: LAC MG31/D78/Vol. 13.
policies of social, economic and external affairs would be understood. There was talk of New Frontiers, national energy grids, national oil policies, incentives for “home-grown” industries, and Northern development. The nation-building project of the Diefenbaker government would “extend aid to economically sound Railway Projects… press for Hydro-Electric development of the Columbia River… call a Convention on Conservation… carry out the Legislative Programme of Arctic research, to develop Arctic routes, to develop those vast hidden resources…”

Of these projects, Diefenbaker’s “Northern Vision” was the most romantic and saleable. Associated with it were stories of conquest and adventure designed to rouse Canadians from their complacent postwar slumber and compel them to vote. “The North,” he claimed, “must be our lodestar… with its vast stores of hidden wealth, is ready to come into its own. The wonder and challenge of the North must become our national consciousness. All that is needed is an imaginative policy which will open its doors to Canadian initiative and enterprise.”

Diefenbaker and his advisors knew they had a winner in the “mysterious North.” Extending from the 60th parallel of latitude all the way to the Pole, the North had long occupied the imaginations of Canadians, filling them with visions of high adventure, wealth and land. As the historian, Daniel Francis, and others have argued, “the North is an idea: not a location; a myth, a promise, a destiny.” The romantic appeal of the open, dangerous and untamed North, the mysteries of which had yet to be fully uncovered by the white, “western” men had long been exploited by explorers and politicians, writers of fiction and non-fiction. Before Diefenbaker,

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498 “Notes of a Speech by John Diefenbaker, 1957”: JGD/PG 01/X11/F/162.
500 The names of Mackenzie, Parry, Collinson, and McClure roll out through the history books, providing Canadians with examples of heroism and tragedy so necessary to the creation of the national “Northern” mythology. In 1956,
the Conservative Prime Minister, Robert L. Borden, publicly declared open season on the North and all its mysteries. In 1913, he commissioned three expeditions to the Canadian Arctic to be conducted by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, an anthropologist by trade and arguably Canada’s most famous arctic explorer. With Borden’s support, the Canadian government assumed “entire responsibility for the Exhibition, as any lands as yet undiscovered in these northern regions should be added to Canadian territory.”

Stefansson wrote a book based on his adventure entitled, *The Friendly Arctic*, which contained a formal introduction penned by Borden himself. As the title suggests, the North is portrayed as a friendly place, rich in resources and high in potential for development and settlement. Borden had read Stefansson’s *My Life with Eskimos*; he had listened carefully to the anthropologist’s ideas about northern settlement and development. His decisions to fund the expedition stemmed from interest in affirming arctic sovereignty and documenting the “many thousands of square miles” that could be added to the country, increasing scientific knowledge and dispelling the “many illusions with respect to Arctic conditions” that might impede development.

Borden also shared with Stefansson an idealized fascination with the North and all the political and economic opportunities offered up by the wild and unsettled frontier.

Diefenbaker’s own desire to conquer the mysterious North represents, as Lisa Blooms suggests, “a peculiar stage of colonialism specific to polar discourses” which integrates “the desire for empire with a presumably disinterested moral and scientific imagination.”

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before Confederation, the conquest and settlement of the west and the exploration of the North was considered an empire-building enterprise by which British North American politicians aimed to spread Albion’s seed and civilization throughout the vast expanses of the world.506 Writers, politicians, and intellectuals came to see the nation’s celebrated northern latitude as its most crucial distinguishing feature, literally and figuratively separating Canadians from their American neighbours to the south.507 From the beginning, W.L. Morton argued, “Canada had a distinct, a unique, a northern identity.” To him, “Canadian history” was “an important chapter in a distinct and even a unique human endeavour, the civilization of the northern and arctic lands.”508 In the same vein, the anthem declaring Canada to be “The True North strong and free,” became a mainstay of postwar political rhetoric. After fighting two-World Wars and coming into its own, the idea of taking on an expansionist enterprise into an extraterritorial space assuaged the nation’s postcolonial complex. Located on the boundaries of the world, the North became a symbol of the growing strength of postwar Canada and its technological achievement, the poles themselves a metaphor for modernity and progress.

Yet even as it celebrated man’s triumph over “nature the monster,” Diefenbaker’s “New National Policy” reflected concerns about the impact of modern life on the moral fibre of the nation.509 Scholars of Canada have only begun to explore the extent that the onslaught of mass consumption and mass culture, the decline of religion as the focal point of communities, rural-

506 For more on the spreading of Albion’s seed, see, for example, George Monro Grant, The Case for Canada, Published by the Imperial Federation League, 20 January 1891; George Monro Grant, Ocean to Ocean: Sanford Fleming’s Expedition Through Canada in 1872 (Toronto: James Campbell and Sons, 1873), 358.
urban migration, the rise of the United States as a superpower, the end of empire, and the reach of Soviet communism preoccupied Canadians in the postwar period. A pervasive sense of unease was being aired on television, in popular magazines and in the daily newspapers. An article written by the celebrated author, Hugh MacLennan, is a case-in-point. In it, MacLennan purports to be “profoundly sorry for the younger generation.” “Television,” he claims, produced “a hypnotically solemnizing effect.” While “the younger generation is healthy,” he reported, “but physically they’re soft. Canadians aren’t winning at the Olympics. Young Russians can walk and skate and do math—Canadian kids can’t.” MacLennan’s preoccupation with the effects of mass culture and consumption was shared by some of his contemporaries, the acclaimed political economist, Harold Adams Innis, among them. In an article entitled “The Church in Canada,” he claimed that, “modern civilization, characterized by an enormous increase in the output of mechanized knowledge with the newspaper, the book, the radio and the cinema, has produced a state of numbness, pleasure and self-complacency perhaps only equalled by laughing-gas.” “In the words of Oscar Wilde,” Innis proclaimed, “we have sold our birthright for a mess of facts.” For a number of postwar thinkers, modern life precipitated a crisis in Canada. It was a disease that ate away at the body politic, replacing the “core values” of church,

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512 Harold A. Innis, The Church in Canada, Toronto, 1945. See also Hugh McLeod, The Religious Crisis of the 1960s (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). George Grant was thinking much the same thing well before he published on the topic of the decline of religion in the modern world. See the correspondence between George Grant and Derek Bedson: The Provincial Archives of Manitoba, box P6415 File 14.
community and family with a blind desire to consume. Everything that once seemed so solid had, as Marshall Berman puts it, apparently melted into air.\textsuperscript{513}

There were therefore a number of nightmare scenarios available in Cold War Canada in which Diefenbaker could cast himself as a manly hero. As Peter Newman and others were wont to argue at the time, Diefenbaker treated politics like “a spectator sport”; every gesture was exploited to the limits of its meaning, every stump speech and television performance became a spectacle of excess. For him, the political contests of 1957-58 were like one long theatrical performance in which complex ideas were reduced to keywords and symbols. Diefenbaker invariably played the humble protagonist fighting against some villain or other.\textsuperscript{514} “Canadians,” he warned, with his right index finger pointed upwards, were more than just “under threat from Atheistic Communist Imperialism.” “Within ourselves,” he contended, “there is a subtle undermining of Confederation and replacing of spiritual by material values.” Perhaps even more disturbing was the notion that on par with the Soviet menace was “the friendly but overwhelming impact of the United States upon our economy and way of life.”\textsuperscript{515} The repertoire of weapons with which Diefenbaker could defeat these forces of evil was buried deep within the annals of Canadian history. By claiming to recuperate both expertise and knowledge from Canada’s golden-age of nation-building, Diefenbaker effectively responded to voters’ unease about the drift in the nation’s course. The New National Policy was a “therapeutic ethos” that linked the realities of the modern, postwar climate with nostalgia for the days when the nation was united

\textsuperscript{513} Marshall Berman, \textit{All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). The production of “manly modernism” as a cure-all for the feminization of the body politic in the postwar period has been discussed at length by Christopher Dummitt in \textit{The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), see esp. the “Introduction,” pp. 1-28.

\textsuperscript{514} As in the sport of wrestling, Diefenbaker’s politics were a “spectacle of excess”—always conceived in narrative form with easily identifiable antagonists and protagonists. Roland Barthes, \textit{Mythologies} (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 15-25.

\textsuperscript{515} “Notes of a Speech by John Diefenbaker, Election 1957”: JGDP MG 01/X11/F/162.
behind the single enterprise of colonizing the west and building the Canadian Pacific Railroad.\textsuperscript{516}

As Richard Slotkin observes of “Frontierism” in America, such nostalgia was not for the reality, but for the myth—not of the Frontier itself, but the glamour of it and the manly vigour and willingness to take risks that conquering it required.\textsuperscript{517} In the modern, technocratic world, mythological fights between good and evil would take place on the mysterious margins, at the intersection of civilization and chaos where pioneering men would be tested against the wild and unknown.

At a time in which the physicality inherent to exploration and to the conquering of wild and foreign lands was lacking in national political life, Diefenbaker’s version of what historian Chris Dummitt dubs “the manly modern”—complete with honour, duty, patriotism, and masculine heroics—“fit nicely into an increasingly modernized Canada in which patriarchal privilege had been shorn of some of its more traditional supports.”\textsuperscript{518} Diefenbaker likened all that was fey about modern life to the Liberal party’s austere, tight-fisted policy of holding back the growth of Canada in the decade immediately following the Second World. In a speech printed in a pamphlet printed for the 1958 federal election, he quoted a line from an Australian scholar on the subject of nationalism in the modern world: “‘A nation,’ said the historian J.C. Horsfall, ‘may have an indigenous dynamic driving it forward or a lethargy holding it back.’” To Diefenbaker, the statement perfectly encapsulated “the difference between the Progressive Conservative and Liberal approaches to national development”: “‘Lethargy’ well describes their lack of leadership, and ‘laissez-faire’ philosophy, and political inertia the traditional Liberal


\textsuperscript{518} Christopher Dummitt, The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada, 2.
attitude toward government responsibility. It is hardly surprising that the vision of Prime
Minister John Diefenbaker is completely lost on [Lester B. Pearson’s] Liberals. It is beyond
their comprehension—‘igloo to igloo.’”

The preoccupation with masculinity in the postwar period stressed a number of “manly
virtues” described by the sociologist, Joane Nagel, as “normative masculinity,” which include
willpower, honour, courage, discipline, competitiveness, persistence, adventurousness,
independence and sexual virility. Keywords like these emphasize manly ideals, “blueprints,” or
sex role stereotypes to which national political leaders in the western world were particularly
sensitive. Diefenbaker’s claim that the New National Policy predated the “Liberal
Growthmanship” and “New Frontiers” election platform made popular in 1960 by John F.
Kennedy reveals his determination to fulfil a certain masculinised and contemporary political
ideal. Attuned to the latest Keynesian scholarship, the Diefenbaker team was the first in
Canada to meld images of cowboys and political rogues with a new and vigorous policy of
economic expansion. The speech that Diefenbaker delivered in Winnipeg on 12 February 1958
epitomizes the extent to which this culture of nationalism was constructed to resonate with
masculine cultural themes:

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519 One of Pearson’s most famous political gaffes was his likening of Diefenbaker’s policy of Northern Development
to one that would build “roads from igloo to igloo.” See “Here are the facts: Highlights and Accomplishments of
Your Progressive Conservative Government”; LAC MG 32 C 65 Vol. 8. Pearson is still remembered for the
comment today. See Senator Marjorie LeBreton’s reminisce about Diefenbaker’s “Roads to Resources” program
and Pearson’s derisory comments: Debates of the Senate (Hansard) 2nd Session, 39th Parliament, Vol. 144, Iss. 8,
Weds. 31 October 2007.

Studies 21:2, 245. For discussions of “normative masculinity” in the postwar, Canadian context, see: Robert
Era,” Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1945-75 (Vancouver: University of British
Columbia Press, 2008), pp. 241-267; Magda Fahrni, Household Politics: Montreal Families and Postwar
Reconstruction (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Alan Nadel, Containment Culture: American
Narrative, Postmodernism and the Atomic Age (Duke University Press, 1995); Elaine Tyler May, Homeward

521 George L. Mosse, The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity (Toronto: Oxford University Press,
1996), 12.

522 John G. Diefenbaker, One Canada, Vol. 2, 13. For more on “Liberal Growthmanship,” see Parker, John Kenneth
Galbraith, esp. Ch. 14: Kennedy, Sputnik, and ‘Liberal Growthmanship,’ pp. 311-337.
[Ours’ is] the only party that give to youth an Elizabethan sense of grand design: the faith to venture with enthusiasm to the frontiers of the nation; that faith, that assurance that will be provided with a government strong enough to implement plans for development. To the young men and women of this nation, I say Canada is within your hands: adventure, adventure to the nation’s utmost bounds, to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. The policies that will be placed before the people of Canada in this campaign will be the ones that will ensure that today and this century will belong to Canada. The destination is one Canada. To that end I dedicate this party.  

Diefenbaker’s discourse is thick with references to golden eras of imperialism past and manly visions of the future. The overt evocation of nostalgia, achieved through his elaborate “restoration” of Macdonald’s Frontier, romanticized the heroic simplicities of the heyday of exploration and the conquering of peoples and lands.

The image of Diefenbaker-as-cowboy, riding in from the west on the winds of change, was one that his public relations team exploited to the maximum. Yet there is evidence to suggest that behind closed doors they worried about the extent to which voters viewed him as either manly or modern. Diefenbaker had borne no children by either of his wives. He was also a practicing Baptist and a teetotaller—characteristics not usually attributed to cowboys. A letter written by Allister Grosart to W.O. Morrison of the O’Brien ad agency in 1958 reveals that Diefenbaker’s masculinity was called into question by some of his advisors. Grosart was apparently “pleased with the photograph of the Prime Minister with the map of Canada in the background” provided by O’Brien for the campaign. He suggested, however, “that maybe the Prime Minister should be portrayed in a more dynamic form.” “The male image the party is trying to create of the Prime Minister,” Grosart reminded the firm, “is most important.” He suggested that they include more images of “Mr. Diefenbaker fishing at Nassau; opening football games, wearing his Indian sweater surrounded by dogs.” “The reason for this,” Grosart


524 An interesting discussion of the influence of Diefenbaker’s Baptist roots on his politics can be found in David Cayley, George Grant in Conversation (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1995), 99. The moment in which Diefenbaker declined Churchill’s request to join him for a drink of some rare Napoleon Brandy was apparently one of the Chief’s favourite stock stories. See Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 120; Newman, Renegade, 61, Smith, Rogue Tory, 250.
explained, “is people have said that Mr. Diefenbaker is maybe a little too pious in that he does not take a drink, his religious background, etc.”

In the same year, a ditty called “The Chief” was circulated by National Headquarters to constituency leaders across Canada for the purpose of selling Diefenbaker’s cowboy image:

Our John Diefenbaker rode out of the West
His political spurs for to win
He was wiry and tough and just chock full of zest
To clout all his foes on the chin.

...A fisherman, he, of prodigious power
He is noted for using good bait
Prime Ministers too, sharks and other like prey
He has lured to their ultimate fate
As a fly caster he is an expert with rod
And with gun he is quite businesslike
He will bring down a bird with such consummate ease
You think he was shooting at Mike.

This John Diefenbaker’s a terrible guy
Just show him a job to be done
Be it fishing or hunting or telling a tale
Or getting a client un-hung

He’ll start off real quiet, disarming and kind
To his foe, be it man, bird or fish
But the minute they move into good target range,
He knows that this one is his dish.

That Diefenbaker’s image of cowboy-hunter-rogue was essential to his nation-building narrative is revealed by the lengths to which his political advisors went to push his supposedly macho temperament. Such a daring program was not for “ivory tower boys.”

Getting the nation moving again required the manly vigour of a populist politician whose prowess in the House of Commons and on the hunting trail proved that he could rescue the masses from their hapless downward spiral towards Americanization, the perils of modernity, Communists and whatever else they were afraid of.

526 “The Chief”: JGDP MG 01/XII/Vol. 59/C/162.
527 “Notes of a Speech by John Diefenbaker, Election 1957”: JGDP MG 01/XI/1/F/162.
The formative influence of “Frontierism” in Canadian history provided Diefenbaker with a ready-made narrative in which he could locate his carefully cultivated populist political persona. Central to it was his experience growing up in the multicultural environment of the prairies. In the first decade of the twentieth century, immigrants from the Ukraine, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and other countries flooded the Canadian West. Diefenbaker notes the ideological influence of life on the Frontier in his memoirs: “the newly opened land tended to be a great social leveller, where each helped anyone in need, regardless of racial origin.”528 Much of Diefenbaker’s early career was spent debating the topic of civil liberties. As we have seen, during his time as a Tory backbencher he regularly attacked the Mackenzie King government for human rights abuses, from the relocation of Japanese Canadians during World War II (1941-45) to the dubious treatment of Communists during the Gouzenko Affair (1946).529 1946 was the first year in which Diefenbaker appealed in the House of Commons for a Canadian bill of rights that would “protect the traditional civil liberties that had developed over the centuries of British jurisprudence.” Such a bill would “guarantee freedom of speech and religion and the right to peaceable assembly; hold that habeas corpus could be suspended only by act of Parliament; and the insurance of the right to legal counsel when giving evidence on trial. Most importantly, the bill would reaffirm the paramount place of Parliament in the protection of individual freedoms.”530 These early appeals for human rights gave direction and purpose to civil liberties groups across Canada and garnered the issue some much needed public attention.531 They were

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also the means by which Diefenbaker gained a reputation as a defender of the so-called “little man.”

Diefenbaker first traded on the slogan, “Vote for Diefenbaker: A Proven Champion of the Common People” during the Progressive Conservative leadership race of 1948 in his fight against the Bay Street candidate, George Drew.\(^{532}\) Although Drew won handily, Diefenbaker would pull it out again for the leadership convention of 1956—this time with the help of Allister Grosart who dedicated an entire pamphlet to the honing of his populist image. “John Diefenbaker,” it read, “is unmistakably identified in the public mind with the cause of human dignity, the ‘little man,’ racial and other minorities, and the right of all Canadians to fair and equal treatment under the constitution.”\(^{533}\) The 1958 ditty “The Chief” portrayed him as both a Frontiersman and a folk hero. Even as he “rode out of the West,” Diefenbaker was “battling his way thru the courts/ All his fame spread abroad, far and wide/So that all the poor people who had a raw deal/Came for miles to get John on their side.” In the next stanza, it is more than just the poor for whom “John” was said to be fighting. “He has spiritual brothers both here and afar,” the song claims, “from Nkrumah to Chief Sitting Bull/There is Emperor Jones and Lloyd [sic] Patterson too/Who join in his brother[ship] [sic] full.”\(^{534}\) In the song, Diefenbaker is depicted alongside such folk heroes and nationalists as Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah, the influential 20th century advocate of Pan-Africanism; Chief Sitting Bull, the Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux who led his people to war at the Battle of Little Bighorn against Custer in 1875; the fictional Emperor Jones, an African American man, who, in the play written by the American dramatist Eugene O’Neill, kills a man, goes to prison, escapes to a Caribbean island and sets himself up as emperor; and the famed African American boxer, Floyd Patterson, a two-time world heavyweight boxing


\(^{534}\) “The Chief”: JGDP MG 01/XII/Vol. 59/C/162.
Counting Diefenbaker among the ranks of famed folk heroes and sportsmen added an entirely new dimension to the carefully crafted populist persona.

The Diefenbaker team’s search for an aphorism that would encapsulate his feelings for the “little man” whatever his ethnic origins, religious beliefs or political inclination ended with the slogan, “One Canada.” Despite his reputation for defending human rights, however, during the election of 1957 Diefenbaker failed to provide voters with a clear indication of what his government would actually do to improve the status quo. In a typical speech delivered in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, the concepts of “One Canada” and “Un-hyphenated Canadianism” were vaguely construed as being part of the all-encompassing New National Policy: “I have come here tonight, my fellow Canadians, to discuss with you the future of Canada—not just of this section or that section—but of the nation as a whole. My theme is one Country—One Policy—my policy embraces the whole of Canada.”

A Progressive Conservative party pamphlet published in the same year, with a frontispiece that contained excerpts from editorials published in newspapers across the country celebrating Diefenbaker focused on his record as a reformer instead of elaborating on any specific policy options. Diefenbaker was “a Canadian with a spirit of true Canadianism… a reformer with a keen sense of the changing needs of his country… Since the day when he first hung out his shingle as a young lawyer in Saskatchewan, in 1919, he has been fighting with clear-sighted vision for those

elements in Canadian life which he believes are vital for the well-being of the individual… He is profoundly dedicated to belief in individual rights and human dignity.”

Buoyed by positive public response to his populist image, Diefenbaker felt freer to be more specific about the sorts of policies he would implement in order to achieve “One Canada” during the election of 1958. Stuffed into his personal and confidential files are myriad letters praising his “god-given compassion for the needs of the people.” “Christians,” one woman professed, knew that “Christ won people to Himself by manifesting love to them in word and deed.” “Canada needs another John the Baptist,” she proclaimed. Seen from this angle, Grosart’s “Follow John” bumper stickers invoked a clever double entendre; like Jesus, voters were asked to be followers of John, a Tory prophet who lived austerely, challenged sinful Liberal rulers, called for repentance and promised God’s justice. After years of toiling in the political wilderness and finally defeating his foes, Diefenbaker was in a position to lay out his vision of a pan-Canadian nationality. He did it in a speech delivered in Winnipeg on 13 March 1958 which announced his intention to pass a Canadian Bill of Rights—a federal statute which would guarantee freedom of speech and religion, the right to life, liberty and security of the person and fundamental justice. The Department of Justice, Diefenbaker announced, had already had a draft of the bill and the government planned to refer it to the Supreme Court for a definitive opinion on constitutional jurisdiction over civil liberties. He promised action on an issue that the Liberals had resisted for 12 years and that the justice department had rejected outright. A little over two years later, on Dominion Day, 1 July 1960, the Canadian Bill of Rights was introduced.

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539 This letter, written by Mrs. M. Witherington of Kitchener Ontario on 17 May 1957, is one of many: JGDP XII/ Vol. 35.

540 The Minister of Justice, E. Davie Fulton, sent the first draft of the Bill of Rights to Diefenbaker on 29 April 1958. DC, Series XIV/E/41.

to Parliament and passed on 10 August—it would be Diefenbaker’s most cherished achievement.\footnote{Diefenbaker delivered a speech on CBC Radio on the eve of Dominion Day, 30 June 1960, providing details and platitudes about the bill that would be presented on the following day: \textit{First Among Equals, The Prime Minister in Canadian Life and Politics}, Library and Archives Canada: \url{http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/2/4/h4-4052-e.html}.}

Like many of his major initiatives, however, the passage of the Bill of Rights was not accomplished without controversy. The document claimed to guarantee fundamental freedoms, but as a mere piece of federal legislation it could be amended by any other law and was therefore limited in its application. Indeed, for most critics, Diefenbaker’s failure to entrench the bill in the Constitution rendered it as merely symbolic piece of paper, “a beacon of direction to legislators, courts, and public administrators,” rather than a measure that was concrete and enforceable.\footnote{The question of civil liberties had traditionally been one of provincial jurisdiction—a potentially volatile can of worms which Diefenbaker was loath to open.\footnote{See Davie Fulton’s commentary on the Bill of Rights on CBC’s \textit{Outlook}, 25 September 1960: \url{http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/rights_freedoms/clips/13524/}.} For some, the bill seemed to go too far and for others not far enough; it was, as Denis Smith puts it, “unsatisfactory to parliamentary traditionalists, to advocates of an entrenched bill in the American style, to French-speaking Canadians uneasy about possible infringements on Quebec’s claims, and to social democrats seeking greater protections for economic and social rights.”\footnote{\textit{Rogue Tory}, 343.}} The question of civil liberties had traditionally been one of provincial jurisdiction—a potentially volatile can of worms which Diefenbaker was loath to open.\footnote{\textit{The Globe and Mail}, 9 September 1959.} Not until 1982, when the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was introduced by Pierre Trudeau and fully entrenched in the Constitution, would the contents of Diefenbaker’s bill of rights apply to all levels of government.

Critics have long blamed the underwhelming legacy of the Bill of Rights on Diefenbaker’s megalomania, his failure to take advice and unwillingness to take on a battle for constitutional reform that he could possibly lose.\footnote{MacLennan, \textit{Toward the Charter}, pp. 127-129.} But in 1958, when Diefenbaker was arguably at the peak of his popularity, the egalitarian vision of “One-Unhyphenated Canada” had an important impact on electoral results, opening up the Conservative party to the west and drawing in the “ethnic vote.”\footnote{Letter from Senator James Gladstone to Diefenbaker, 6 June 1963 about the impact of voting rights for First Nations peoples on reserves: Glenbow, James Gladstone Fonds, M7655/181; “Diefenbaker and the Native Vote,” \textit{The Tenth Decade}, 10 November 1971.} Michael Starr, a Conservative M.P. of Ukrainian descent recalled the reaction of immigrants in the West to Diefenbaker’s message: “I got the biggest thrill in some of these small places out west. The halls would be filled with people, and sitting there in the front would be the first Ukrainian immigrants with shawls and hands gnarled from work. I would speak for about twenty minutes in English then I would switch to Ukrainian and tears would run down their faces.”\footnote{Stursberg Interview with Michael Starr, 19 October 1973: LAC MG 31 D78 Vol. 15.} For Starr, it was the emotional impact of Diefenbaker’s message, the promise that Canadian institutions might become a better mirror of the changing face of civil society that caught on.

Hugh Segal, now a Conservative member of the Senate, has similar recollections of the effectiveness of Diefenbaker’s inclusive message. He was a young boy “in what was essentially an ethnic school made up of children of immigrants in Montreal” when, during the federal election of 1958, it was announced that Prime Minister would visit his class. Although his was a “rotten Liberal borough with hardly any Conservative supporters to speak of,” Diefenbaker came anyways to talk “about his vision of the country as reflected by the Bill of Rights. It was in a sense the first officially Canadian reflection of the mix of national identity and national diversity and how our institutions were going to broaden their reach to make everyone feel comfortable.” According to Segal, the “new Canada” of the postwar period “was ethnic small business and
urbanizing in a more dramatic way it was entrepreneurial it was nationalist it was more about small business than big business.” Quite aside from the specific policy content of a political platform,” Segal argues, “a leader’s real job is to create a sense of community and common cause.” Diefenbaker’s message of “One Canada” was “more about a real sense of partnership and sharing and letting a million flowers grow in diversity. It was about a much more multi-ethnic society as opposed to strictly English and French.” Although Segal adds the caveat that Diefenbaker seemed unable to “translate that message into real instrumental change on the ground,” he believes that the vision of “One un-hyphenated Canada opened politics up to more people,” and channelled “public anger and the will for change” among segments of society that had never been engaged before.

Success in Quebec was another matter, however. From the beginning, Diefenbaker’s candidacy was frowned upon by a French Canadian press that viewed him as throw-back to the Victorian era. His notorious refusal to follow tradition and find someone from Quebec to second his nomination for the leadership of the party prompted near mutiny among his French Canadian colleagues. The problem, suggested Pierre Sévigny, Diefenbaker’s Associate Defence Minister, was not that the Conservative leader was one of those “Anglo-Canadians who was hostile to Quebec,” but rather that he failed to understand it, and so was “indifferent to its incomprehensible attitude.”

In the mid-late 1950s, the problem of French Canadian nationalism was barely a blip on the radar of most English-Canadian Conservative politicians. In the run up to the election of

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550 Interview with Hugh Segal, 19 July 2007.
553 Ibid., 40.
1957, Diefenbaker and his team of strategists worked under the assumption that Quebec was unwinnable and that, in order to have any chance at forming a government, meagre party resources should be spent elsewhere. The idea of playing disaffected English Canadian provinces against the Liberal stronghold of Quebec had been worked out years before by Gordon Churchill. After stewing for two decades over the party’s perennially weak Quebec organization and its failure to broker any influence in the province, Churchill prepared an intraparty memorandum which argued that since Confederation, when governments toppled it was because the decisive margin of seats had been supplied by Ontario, the Maritimes and the West. This indicated, in his opinion, that Conservative attempts to re-conquer Quebec from the Liberals amounted to squandering scarce funds and energy which could be applied more fruitfully in other, English speaking provinces. After all, Quebec’s long-lasting love affair with Wilfrid Laurier and vivid memories of Robert Borden’s riot-inducing policy of conscription implemented during the First World War had rendered the province impregnable to English Canadian Conservatives. Contrary to prevailing belief, however, Churchill insisted that enough seats could be won outside of Quebec to enable the Tories to form at least a minority Government. In the words of the report, the military maxim—“reinforce success and not failure”—was considered as applicable political strategy. To the pragmatic Conservative strategist who had no notion of how to deal with Quebec and no intention of wasting valuable resources to strengthen the organization in the

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555 Churchill was thinking along these lines as early as 1953. See Gordon Churchill to Derek Bedson, 28 September 1953 Derek Bedson Fonds, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Box P6412 File 14. See also Peter Stursberg’s Interview with Gordon Churchill, 25 May 1972 and Peter Stursberg’s *Leadership Gained*, pp. 44-45. An example of contemporary criticism of Churchill’s political strategy can be found in, Walter Filley, “Elections have Consequences,” *The Canadian Forum*, Toronto, Ontario, August 1957.
province, the risk of alienating French Canadians even further seemed worth taking if it meant winning the election.\footnote{For more on the abject failure of Diefenbaker to win over even the French Canadian segment of his party even at his peak, see, Pierre Sévigny, \textit{This Game of Politics}, pp. 44-48.}

At least in part, then, Diefenbaker’s pan-Canadian platform was a catch-all by necessity—he did not possess a specific plan tailored for a French Canadian audience. Indeed, when he arrived in cities like Quebec and Montreal with his vision of “One Canada,” Diefenbaker seemed wholly unaware that slogans like these could be construed as dangerous to Quebecers. As Lowell Murray, a young assistant to Davie Fulton, Diefenbaker’s Minister of Justice later observed: “he did not understand the challenges faced by a minority society and could not fathom that it would prefer to stand on its own rather than take shelter under his all-encompassing umbrella.”\footnote{Interview with Senator Lowell Murray, 15 February 2007. See also Robert Bothwell, \textit{Canada and Québec: One Country, Two Histories} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), 96; André Laurendeau, \textit{The Essential Laurendeau}, Ramsay Cook and Michael Derek Behiels, eds., (Toronto: Copy Clark Publishing, 1976), pp. 208-209.}

Even as late as 1962, two years after the Liberal Premier, Jean Lesage, put in motion far reaching social and economic policies associated with the “Quiet Revolution,” Diefenbaker and his team were still in denial about the implications of French Canadian nationalism. In a letter to Roy Faibish, a young Brian Mulroney voiced his concern about Diefenbaker’s failure to acknowledge the new Quebec and attempt to woo it. Quebecers, he argued, had always judged Diefenbaker as being “anti-French.” Their negative opinion of the Prime Minister was “not the result of any one major event” but could rather be attributed to his failure to assign more French Canadians to important cabinet positions; to “appoint a topflight French Canadian as a Special Assistant or Chief Counsel to the Prime Minister”; and, most importantly, to “acknowledge the validity of the ‘partnership theory’ of Confederation.”\footnote{Brian Mulroney to Roy Faibish, 5 January 1962: LAC MG 32/B40/Vol. 157. For more on the relationship between Diefenbaker and Mulroney, see Rae Murphy, Robert Chodos, and Nick Auf der Maur, \textit{Brian Mulroney: The Boy from Baie-Comeau} (Halifax: Formac Publishing Co., 1984), pp. 38-39, 85-86.}
“pact between French and English,” which guaranteed “each group an equal right to its own faith, language, laws and customs.” The special status of Quebec, he argued, was not acknowledged by Diefenbaker in theory or in practice.

Mulroney was right. The argument that the federal government of Canada should acknowledge that French Canadians in Quebec constituted a state within a state was anathema to Diefenbaker’s idea of Confederation. Like many English Canadians, Diefenbaker was accustomed to thinking of Confederation as a national unification that transformed a scattered collection of colonies into a single people under one “vigorous” national government. And, like many of his colleagues, when he looked at French Canada, he saw the historic coalition of Macdonald and Cartier. In speech after speech, Diefenbaker reminded French Canadian audiences that “there would not have been Confederation,” after all, “if Cartier and Macdonald had not come together to preserve the constitutional rights of the provinces.” It was a Conservative coalition, he argued, that was responsible for the implementation of “the special federal system of government.” In their “authoritarian” pursuit of power and abetting of the “ever-increasing trend towards centralization,” Diefenbaker believed that the Liberal government had lost sight of the basis of Confederation. He assured French Canadians that a Diefenbaker government would “draw on the spiritual wells of the past to solve the problems of the present.” “Cartier and Macdonald said this was one nation,” Diefenbaker declared: “They stood, their

560 For more on the origins of French Canadian conceptions of confederation, see Arthur Silver, The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1865-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
561 See, for example, Diefenbaker Film “D,” “Our One-Canada Program,” Election 1958: Derek Bedson Fonds, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, box P6436, file 6.
562 See, for example, the running correspondence between Gordon Churchill and E. Davie Fulton (1955-6) on the Macdonald-Cartier alliance and the English-Canadian idea of Confederation: LAC: MG 32 B11 Vol. 6.
memory stands, for the supremacy of Parliament, equality among the provinces, [and] one united Canada."

The platitudes about the Founding Fathers, the supremacy of Parliament, equality and national unity that Diefenbaker rhymed off on visits to the province of Quebec were not conjured up by campaign strategists. Their origins can be found in the work of Donald Creighton, whose two-volume biography of Sir John A. Macdonald and general history of Canada, *Dominion of the North*, decorated shelves in the homes of most leading Tory politicians. Creighton’s history of Canada put into prose a school of thought on Confederation that was propagated at the time by such thinkers as Eugene Forsey, John Farthing and in the 1960s by George Grant; theirs was a national narrative that rejected what was considered to be the liberal tradition of America and instead spoke of a relationship between rights and state power, of the nature of peace, order and good government as enshrined in Canada’s unwritten, British constitutional tradition. It was an idea of Canada and English Canadian identity that would hold sway over the Conservative party until Robert Stanfield finally wrested the leadership from Diefenbaker in 1967.

Creighton’s “story of Canadian nationality” seemed, in his words, “to write itself around Sir John Alexander Macdonald.” His Macdonald was described as a pragmatist guided by what were construed as extraordinarily shrewd political instincts. Yet by the early 1860s the cause of Confederation was the motivating force behind his politics. Central to his quest was the necessity of harmonizing relations between sectional interests within the colonies, the most

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565 Notes for a Speech by John G. Diefenbaker, date unknown: JGDP XIV/A/2.
566 A list of the books located in Diefenbaker’s private library, Creighton’s works among them, can be found at the Diefenbaker Centre. The lines of communication between Creighton and the Tories—Alvin Hamilton, E. Davie Fulton, Diefenbaker—were open throughout Diefenbaker’s time in office. See the Donald Creighton Fonds, LAC: MG D77 Vol. 16.
568 Creighton, *Dominion of the North*, 323.
obvious of which was the divide between English and French-speaking Canadians. After Lord Durham called for the unification of the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada in 1839, pitting equal numbers of French against English, Macdonald awakened to the fact that “the frank recognition of the cultural dualism of Canadian life” would be “essential to political success.”

It was this evolution of thinking that gave rise to the alliance of Macdonald and George Etienne Cartier, two Founding Fathers who together created the Liberal-Conservative party in 1854. Despite their differences, they had in common a wariness of the United States and an idea of government that Creighton disdainfully referred to as “political liberalism.” In Creighton’s eyes, it was this “deliberate rejection of American principles of state rights and deliberate preference for a strong central authority” which compelled the Founding Fathers to model the new Canada in accordance with the old Colonial system of the British Empire. Just as the Imperial Parliament retained sovereignty over its dependant colonial legislatures, so the central government of Canada would reign over the lesser provincial governments. “The historic British tradition of a sovereign Central Government” was, as Macdonald informed his colleagues at the Quebec conference in 1864, “the best guarantee of liberty.”

In this new variant of colonialism writ-small, the provincial governments possessed their share of local responsibilities but would all be equally beholden to a strong, central government.

Diefenbaker’s idea of federal-provincial relations, and his response to the “problem” of calls for provincial rights was grounded, however vaguely, in this conservative constitutional

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569 Ibid., 283.
570 A frame of mind which enabled the Macdonald-Cartier team to gain the support of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. Ibid., 284.
571 Ibid., 307.
By the late 1960s, after losing the “Flag Debate” and in the face of the findings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1969), Diefenbaker elaborated on a conception of Confederation and of Canadian nationality that he had held throughout his political career. “Much has been done by the present [Liberal] government,” he warned, to deprecate the monarchy, to remove traditional symbols, to play games with the coat of arms, to unify our armed forces and get rid of uniforms that show Canada’s British tradition.” Echoing the words of the thinker, John Farthing, Diefenbaker reminded his “friends in French Canada” that “the freedom you enjoy in our country came because there was a British monarchial [sic] system.”

Cartier and Macdonald had rejected the rugged individualism of republicanism in the United States and, instead, built “One Canada” made up of disparate provinces united by a central government that was beholden to the Crown.

When Diefenbaker promoted a policy of “One Canada,” his mind’s eye envisioned a system whereby the various parts had joined together in a Confederation which provided stability and continuity of government and policy in those affairs which were of mutual concern, while leaving to the provinces those matters which were of local and regional interest.

When he arrived in Quebec promising to “re-establish the true principles of the Confederation pact set forth in the British North American Act, to restore the supremacy of Parliament and the rule of law,” Diefenbaker saw himself presiding over a renewed spirit of cooperation between the federal and provincial governments.

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574 This excerpt is taken from a file in Diefenbaker’s papers that was destined for his memoirs. Entitled “The Night of the Knives” it responded to the embrasure of the findings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-9) by the Liberals and many in his own party: JGDP Series XIV/A/2.
575 “The Concept of Confederation,” Notes from an Address by The Hon. Davie Fulton at the University of Saskatchewan, 23 March 1964: LAC MG 32/B9/91.
Liberal federal government. As Duff Roblin, the Progressive Conservative Premier of Manitoba later observed, “John Diefenbaker promised to rectify the hard feelings that had arisen as a result of Liberals policies and we wanted to believe him.”

Although intrigued by the possibility that a Diefenbaker government might do things differently, during the federal election of 1957, the Premier of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis, had no intention of taking Quebec’s own Louis St. Laurent to task for treason. For decades, the Liberal ascendancy had been based on solid strength in French Canada and few anticipated a reversal of fortune. In any case, as the political scientist Michael Oliver suggests, the federal Liberals were “more interested in reaching a modus vivendi with M. Duplessis’ party than replacing it.” At final count, the Progressive Conservatives had won 9 seats in Quebec in comparison to the Liberals’ 62. Dismal results like these suggested that nothing had changed, but in the aftermath of the election the Liberal party had a new leader, Lester (Mike) Pearson, whose French accent was as appalling as Diefenbaker’s. During the election of 1958, a cartoon published in the Montreal Gazette, entitled, “Two Romeos and Juliet,” pictured “Mike” and “Dief” sporting Elizabethan era tights with French dictionaries tucked under one of their arms and ladders under the other. On the balcony above, decorated with the fleur de lis and a sign advertising “Quebec Seats,” a damsel waits to be wooed by one of the two clowns hurrying around below. Behind her stands a smiling Duplessis.

Duplessis had already decided, however, which clown he would choose. Like the Roman Catholic priests who had thrown their support behind Conservative party of Macdonald and Cartier in the hopes of staving off political and social change, Duplessis lent his formidable

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The Premier of Quebec had no desire to instigate a revolution that would modernize and liberalize Quebec—what he wanted was a re-calibration of federal provincial relations. He was, in any case, a Conservative by inclination with scant love for the Liberals’ interventionist policies. Conrad Black has argued that Duplessis’ support of Diefenbaker did not necessarily imply an endorsement of the Progressive Conservative programme. According to Black, “it was out of a mélange of vengefulness, autonomist ambition, and straight-line partisanship that the Duplessis-Diefenbaker alliance was born.” Yet it can be argued that, in helping Diefenbaker win a majority, Duplessis was, at the very least, willing to humour the claim that a Progressive Conservative government would do things differently. He wanted what Diefenbaker was willing to give—the restoration of local autonomy and, more specifically, Quebec’s share of provincial tax money that had been co-opted by the Federal government. Duplessis’ goal was to achieve more control over Quebec’s finances and culture; he believed that the federal government should back off and hoped that Diefenbaker would concur.

The Quebec Premier’s active engagement behind the scenes in the national election of 1958 reveals a willingness to engage in federalism that would end, abruptly, with his death and the onset of the Quiet Revolution. More than one observer noted that Duplessis personally “selected the candidates, authorized the contributions, and oversaw the effort.” Yet as Jacques Flynn, one of Diefenbaker’s top Quebec colleagues, noted at the time, although these candidates possessed direct ties to Duplessis “they were more attracted by federal politics than by provincial politics.” He considered “most of them as Conservatives more than Union Nationale.” The new

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580 For a colourful account of the means by which Macdonald and Cartier garnered the support of the Church in Quebec, see Creighton, *Dominion of the North*, 284.
583 Rumilly, 304.
PC candidates from Quebec were excited by the momentum of Diefenbaker’s campaign, they knew he would win and they wanted to sit in Parliament and be a part of federal politics. In his memoirs, Pierre Sévigny contends that Duplessis wanted Diefenbaker in office so badly that he often provided “tips” on the art of image craft. In light of the catastrophic record of Conservative candidates in Quebec, peddling the leader’s image rather than the old party label was the best way forward. “You have got to make him a combination of Churchill, de Gaulle, Moses, God and maybe the Devil,” Duplessis insisted to Sévigny, “because he has got a bit of that in him. The combination usually wins votes. Do that.” Grosart agreed, of course, with the notion that peddling Diefenbaker’s image was the only way to overcome the Conservative party’s reputation for being backwards and British in Quebec. In an interview with the journalist, Peter Stursberg, he acknowledged that “in ’58 we got the votes, but it wasn’t because of any organization.” Rather it was a result of Duplessis and the vague promise that Diefenbaker could offer to Quebecers a new deal.

The rousing support of Duplessis paid off: out of the 208 seats that the Progressive Conservatives won in the federal election of 1958, fifty of them were from Quebec. Although initially viewed as a triumph, however, Diefenbaker’s success in the province would prove a mixed blessing. “It was very difficult situation,” Grosart recalled, “and to be quite frank the Conservative party was not structured culturally, politically, or any other way to suddenly integrate fifty members from Quebec, the majority of whom were not English speaking.” During his tenure as leader, Diefenbaker’s olive branch consisted of piecemeal concessions to Quebecers. Almost immediately he introduced simultaneous translation in the House of Commons for the first time in the history of the Commons. Not very long after that, he appointed

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584 Stursberg, *Leadership Gained*, 100.
587 Sévigny, *This Game of Politics*, 40.
the first French Canadian Governor General, Georges Vanier.\footnote{Interview with Lowell Murray, 15 February 2007; “Georges P. Vanier, Soldier, Diplomat, Governor General,” National Film Board of Canada, Directed by Clément Perron, 1960: http://www.nfb.ca/film/george_p_vanier/} Unfortunately for Diefenbaker, however, the death of Duplessis in the fall of 1959, followed by the premature death of his successor, Paul Sauvé, on New Year’s Day, 1960 precipitated the end of the conservative Union Nationale.\footnote{Robert Bothwell and others have suggested that, had he not died, Paul Sauvé “might have been just as likely a “founder” of the Quiet Revolution. With Sauvé as an ally, Diefenbaker might have remained in power. See Bothwell, \textit{Canada and Quebec: One Country, Two Histories} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), pp. 102-103.} Sauvé’s successor, Jean Lesage, had been a member of St. Laurent’s cabinet, was a good friend of Lester. B. Pearson’s, and had no intention of using the provincial machine to support a Conservative government which was ignorant of Quebec.\footnote{Bothwell, \textit{Canada and Quebec}, 100.}

Diefenbaker’s continued attempts to fulfil the dream of “One Canada” by introducing changes to census forms in 1961 which would eliminate the need for citizens to state their ethnic background and allow them to simply call themselves “Canadians” made matters worse for both him and his party. As the comedian, Larry Zolf, put it: “the one Canada Diefenbaker envisaged was a baptismal melting pot into which the Cherniaks, the Caccias, the Paproskis, the Cardinals, the Chretiens, the Guays, the Diefenbakers and the Campbell-Bannermans were to be immersed, miraculously coming out un-hyphenated Canadians.”\footnote{Larry Zolf, \textit{Dance of the Dialectic: How Pierre Elliot Trudeau Went from Philosopher-King to the Incorruptible Robespierre to Philosopher-Queen Marie Antoinette to Canada’s Generalissimo Ky and then to Mackenzie King and Even Better} (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1973), 36.} To the end, it is clear that Diefenbaker was unable to reconcile his idea of Confederation with the demands of French Canadian nationalism. Quebecers voted for him because they hoped for change and they were disappointed.

Even at the peak of Diefenbaker’s fame, there were pundits busily predicting when and how far he would fall. In the aftermath of 1957, as contributors to the \textit{Canadian Forum} attempted to grapple with the Diefenbaker’s victory over the governing Liberal party, bets were being taken on how long it would be before Diefenbaker’s electoral platform came crashing
down on top of him and the Progressive Conservative party. “His appeal is entirely to the public,” A. Vixen complained, “which has swallowed, without realizing it, the Diefenbaker Myth. Once Mr. Diefenbaker has run through his fund of popularity… his weaknesses will become glaringly apparent.” Sooner rather than later, the masses would have the evidence they needed to convince them that good public relations and salesmanship could not be a substitute for good government. “Mr. Diefenbaker has certainly not yet proved himself to have a prime minister’s mentality, or indeed, anything in excess of an apocalyptic old-style preacher’s passionate platitudes,” remarked one P.W.F. “How long,” he inquired of his peers, “will it be before the Canadian people will see through Mr. Diefenbaker?” Diefenbaker’s style left him open to the criticism that his rhetoric was empty, that he was a megalomaniac who loved the spotlight too much and the everyday management of government too little.

The reaction of critics to Diefenbaker is telling. For the first time in Canadian history, a modern political campaign had employed public relations and all the tools of image craft to great effect. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the public sphere in which Canadian politics was operating at mid-century abruptly changed in the late 1950s. The new politics of celebrity, the made-for-television drama suddenly became an intrinsic part of the Canadian political campaign. It was this shift in media, the restyling of politics, the consumerism, celebrity and cynicism so evident in the aftermath of the federal elections of 1957-8 that suggests the extent to which Diefenbaker’s electoral victories mark a turning point in Canadian history.

Diefenbaker and his team grasped the importance of this structural shift in Canadian politics and responded accordingly. Possessed as he was of some Victorian pretentions—he was a moralist, a teetotaller, an evangelical but, in the late 1950s, he was plugged into the culture of

the new postwar world in a way that his opponents, St. Laurent and Lester B. Pearson, were not. His New National Policy signalled to voters that he was ready to put into operation the new, modern state machine to promote equality among the provinces, open “New Frontiers” of possibility, take risks with public money and pursue a policy of expansion. Such a burgeoning country as Canada, he suggested, was equal to the task. And he insisted that once awakened from the slumber induced by Liberal, bureaucratic management the public had a special role to play in the process. The dichotomy he exploited that pitted tight money Liberal technocrats and white collar experts against the dynamic and manly lawyer-cum-cowboy Tory fit the blueprint of manly modernism and put his rhetoric in line with popular expansionist policies that would soon sweep North America with the election of John F. Kennedy.

Although Diefenbaker’s conception of political leadership belonged to the nineteenth century, a world of gentlemen gladiators, giants and grand gesture, it intersected neatly with the new postwar politics of celebrity. For him, hero-worship was a powerful discursive strategy for dramatically embodying political values in ways that could capture the national imagination. The myth of Sir John A. was a resonant symbol, a model and a tool that justified action on the stage of historical conflict. Diefenbaker’s style suited the moment; rural-urban migration, postwar immigration, the ‘baby boom,’ increased income and physical mobility and the rapid diffusion of ideas and images through the growth of print and electronic media eroded the foundations of religious, ethnic and community loyalties, creating a vacuum filled by a new politics of celebrity. In Diefenbaker’s carefully cultivated political persona, nineteenth century Romanticism combined with twentieth century image craft to fill, however briefly, a yawning gap in national political life.
Nations, as Benedict Anderson says, are “imagined communities.” With all its flaws, Diefenbaker’s “vision” — of national unity, of “One Canada” — attempted to imagine and so constitute a nation as a united, cultural community. Although defined in sometimes sexist and imperialistic terms, the mythic narrative of “One unhyphenated Canada” was Diefenbaker’s rendition of a broad, inclusive, and progressive postwar nation. His government failed and his legacy is mixed, but Diefenbaker told and sold a nation-building narrative that derived its authority not only from high flown rhetoric but from its historicity; when tested against current experience, it was modified to fit the technological and psychological needs of the day—and for a brief shining moment, it sounded like it just might work. During the general election of 1958, Diefenbaker was able to build a consensus around a mythological pan-Canadian vision. The consensus did not last long, especially in Quebec, yet it embodied the hopes and fears of a broad cross-section of Canadian society — taken from all regions and classes, ethnic and religious minorities, men and women living in rural and urban areas. In this way, Diefenbaker was the politician for the moment, capable of producing a rhetoric in which Canada could remember its history while incorporating new sets of memories, dreams and anxieties. While his vision proved too grandiose to be effectively put into practice, Diefenbaker provided a therapeutic nationalist narrative that evoked a golden age past while fitting the needs of the modern Western society that Canada had become.

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Bound by burnt-orange leather and etched with golden crowns commemorating Queen Elizabeth II’s Coronation in 1953, Lucy Sansom’s scrapbook is filled with newspaper clippings and images that highlight the changing fortunes of the Conservative party in Canada after the Second World War. As one of the founding members of the Women’s Progressive Conservative Association of Canada (WPCA), Sansom played an instrumental role in the successful campaigns that saw Progressive Conservatives, Hugh John Flemming and Robert Stanfield, win their bids for the Premierships of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in 1952 and 1956. As the National President of the Women’s Progressive Conservative Association of Canada from 1954-1956, she was a staunch supporter of the federal Progressive Conservative party leader, George Drew, and dedicated to promoting the Conservative cause at the federal level. Although ousted from the position of National President during the leadership convention of 1956—spurned at the last moment by a “strong faction among the [WPCA] women that had other plans”—Sansom stayed on as a campaign organizer and fundraiser for the PC candidate in her home riding in Fredericton, New Brunswick during the federal elections of 1957 and 1958. Her good works were recognized by such high ranking Tories as Dalton Camp, George Hees, Donald Fleming, and, most tellingly, John and Olive Diefenbaker, who wrote a special note acknowledging her “steadfast loyalty” to the party.

“Club women” like Sansom were joined by the wives of PC Members of Parliament—Olive Diefenbaker among them—in providing essential support services to the party organization and their husbands at both the federal and provincial levels. At a time when the

595 See Dalton Camp, *Gentleman Players and Politicians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), 69. There were also several letters of sympathy written to Sansom from prominent Conservatives such as Dalton Camp and George Hees that recognized her loyalty to the party and regret the “difficulties” and “disappointments” of the recent meeting in Ottawa. See Dalton Camp to Lucy Sansom, 27 January 1956; George Hees to Lucy Sansom, 20 February 1956: LAC MG 30/E 537/19.

596 John G. Diefenbaker to Lucy Sansom, 8 June 1957: LAC: MG 30/E537/18.
desire to reaffirm gender divisions after the flux of depression and war and in light of the
diminishment of other patriarchal controls in the family and economy, they were the perfect
feminine foils to emphasize the manliness of their Conservative counterparts.\(^{597}\) Quite beyond
their administrative and symbolic roles, however, club women and party wives were responsible
for organizing workshops and rallies that aimed to recruit and politicize women and encourage
them to develop skills deemed necessary for active citizenship. In the process of learning the
party platform and imbibing concepts, beliefs, and values that made up the Conservative
narrative, new recruits became increasingly proficient “salesladies”—tellers and sellers of the
partisan narrative. It was Conservative women, after all, who were given the responsibility of
arming the next generation of loyal partisans with the metaphors, images, and symbols they
would need to fight the Grits of the future.

This domestic, segregated role of club women and parliamentary spouses was called into
question with the rise of the Second Wave feminist movement in the early 1960s. Yet the fault
tines which divided them from the small but growing number of “party women” who pursued
public office and occupied important roles within the mainstream party organization had
emerged much earlier. In the early-mid 1950s, the divisions became more obvious as
Conservative women began to openly differ about how and for what reasons women should
engage in the political life of the nation as citizens and as partisans. Club women and
parliamentary spouses believed that their work ennobled the public world of men and that by
becoming politically active they could throw their mantle of private morality over the public
sphere. In contrast, party women located the source of women’s woes in the club woman’s
moralized privatization and gender segregation and saw their salvation in going public. They
aimed to integrate into the ongoing political structure of the mainstream political party with its

\(^{597}\) For more on how the ideal of the “manly modern” came to prominence in the postwar period, see Christopher
attendant schedule of benefits and rewards. They engaged in the incremental politics of “running repairs” and called for reforms which did not involve making major alterations to the social and political systems. Because party women understood the struggle for formal-legalistic equality to be slow and ongoing, they deemed it acceptable to establish their careers as women in a sex-ordered patriarchal world. Unlike ghettoized wives and club women, who believed that women had special “domestic” political skills and duties to perform, party women asked “Why can’t a woman be more like a man?”

Although divided along the same lines that would separate maternal feminists from those of the Second Wave feminist movement, the opinions of Tory women converged in their rejection of “radical” feminist agendas.\(^\text{598}\) The sexual politics that resulted from their activism were thus of a fairly mild kind. They were generally wary of feminist strategies and reluctant to be thought of as feminists. They sought the removal of barriers to their participation rather than guarantees that they would be included. When it came to deciding whether or not they should use party politics to advance arguments for gender equality or whether women’s work would be used to improve the party’s political fortunes, most Conservative women chose party loyalty over the pursuit of sex equality. Even as they disagreed on the meaning of Conservative womanhood, they remained united behind the partisan narrative itself. In whatever their chosen capacity, Conservative women emphasized that their goal was not to supplant men but rather to take up a place alongside them. Whether they worked within the mainstream structures of the party or outside of it, Conservative women played a crucial role in laying the groundwork for “the Diefenbaker Moment.”

There is a debate among scholars of Canada as to the extent and effectiveness of women’s involvement in mainstream political parties after the Conservative Prime Minister, Robert Borden, introduced a bill in 1918 that extended the franchise to women. In an early study of the women’s suffrage movement in Canada, Catherine Cleverdon portrayed suffragettes as heroines whose struggle for the vote played a vital role in the advancement of women’s active participation within the public sphere. The disappointing race and class biases of non-radical maternal feminists who had no desire to overturn the patriarchal structure of politics and society led some feminist historians to flatly reject Cleverdon’s thesis and spurn the contributions of suffragists. More recently, Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman have sought out the middle ground in their examination of women’s political organizing in the twentieth century. They argue that the suffrage movement encouraged the next generation of women to participate in the hustings despite the masculine bias in the construction of citizenship and explore the “potentially radical” impact that women had on the direction Canadian politics after female enfranchisement.

Taking into account the wide range of activities in which women were engaged in the mid-twentieth century means dispensing with the idea that between the two waves of feminism (suffrage and the 1960s) lies a political wasteland for women. Of late, the untold stories of women who actively engaged in non-traditional politics and various grassroots movements have come to light thanks to the work of scholars determined to highlight the connections between


For the most damning condemnation of maternal feminism, see Carol Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 48.

women’s activism and the state “beyond the vote.” This emphasis on non-traditional politics flows from a concern that historians and political scientists have neglected important aspects of women’s activism by focussing on their integration into mainstream political movements and parties. The argument is that that a more complete picture of women’s political activity requires an awareness of these activities outside the mainstream and at the local level.

As important as studies of women of the left are to painting a picture of women’s contribution to politics and political thought in the early to mid-twentieth century, the role that women of the centre-right in Canada have played in shaping the Progressive Conservative party and political discourse in general has received scant scholarly attention. To date, Sylvia Bashevkin’s *Toeing the Lines* is the only comprehensive analysis of women’s experiences in traditional party politics in English Canada. In the book, Bashevkin questions whether women would have historically been more successful in attempting to exercise influence through politically independent pressure groups or partisan channels. Her study is framed by a dichotomy that separates women who chose to take up careers within traditional patriarchal party structures from those who pursued their goals through independent women’s organizations.

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argument is based on the tacit assumption that women were faced with the decision of having to either forfeit their feminist goals to participate in traditional, male dominated parties or surrender their potential to make a contribution to mainstream political discourse by choosing to participate in marginal, feminist women’s groups.

The dichotomy is a false one. The relationship that Conservative club and party women constructed between femininity and patriotism and femininity and citizenship protected them from accusations of feminist radicalism during the height of the Cold War. Bashevkin shows how partisan politics both advanced and impeded the progress of women in obtaining positions within the upper echelons of mainstream political parties and taking up important decision-making roles in English Canadian politics, but she ignores the complex motives that induced women to join patriarchal, traditional political parties in the first place. She focuses on quantitative and comparative data that tells us much about how many women took part in Canadian politics and the specific roles they played within political parties but avoids taking a riskier, qualitative look at the meaning behind the rhetoric and actions of partisan women and the nature of the social pressures that prompted them to adopt their party’s particular world view.

Now that gender has become relevant to the thinking of historians concerned with issues of politics, political ideology, and power, it is time to start making connections between gendered conceptions of partisan principles and narratives and the ways they shaped political discourse in Canada. As Joan Scott contends, “historians need to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to a range of activities, social organizations and historically specific cultural representations.” In the United States

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and in Britain there is a growing historiography that recognizes the ways in which gender values have influenced conflicts within and between mainstream political parties, rather than reinforcing male bonds, and explores the ways in which gendered identities are related to partisanship.\textsuperscript{608}

Seen from this angle, rather than studying women in isolation, apart from political parties in their supposedly sheltered women’s auxiliaries, it is important to view them as active agents who effectively helped fashion, articulate and successfully peddle party principles and shape political agendas from the grassroots to the national level. New light can be thrown on questions of partisanship and identity in Canada by paying close attention to the relationships between concepts of womanhood, ideas of citizenship, and the fashioning of partisan values. It can also give us important insight into the ways in which these concepts informed the politics of Progressive Conservatism as well as individual party women in the postwar period.

Club women played a crucial role in the marketing of the Tory narrative after the Second World War. Lucy Sansom’s scrapbook was as much a salute to her own achievements as a Conservative “party woman” as it was a celebration of Progressive Conservatism itself. In it are newspaper clippings that describe the myriad speeches that she delivered across Canada as National President of the WPCA; letters from party women congratulating her on successfully forming new women’s clubs across Canada; an itinerary that lists the scores of teas, luncheons, and supper club fundraisers that she organized in support of the Conservative cause; dozens of WPCA newsletters designed for the dual purpose of educating women about Progressive

Conservative party principles and policies and highlighting grassroots activities carried out by its members “from sea to shining sea”; a running correspondence with both Liberal and Progressive Conservative Cabinet ministers on topics that ranged from discussions about international tariffs and trade, the importance of tradition and the “maintenance of family ties” to the Commonwealth; invitations trimmed in ribbons and gold to parties thrown in honour of Tory notables like Lord Beaverbrook and the British MP and political thinker, Quintin Hogg.

Sansom’s book was organized thematically, under the headings “constitution,” “country,” “national symbols,” “religion” and “Commonwealth.” To her, Conservatism was not merely a party label but a way of life. So basic was Conservatism to the constitution of her identity as an active citizen, wife, mother, and loyal subject of the Queen that the party mantra became a narrative that she consistently employed to make sense of, account for and pass judgments about the practices of social and historical actors, their collective actions, their modes of meanings of institution and nation-building, and the actions of her colleagues and friends. And like the Conservative Party, “which has historically stood proudly upon its principles,” so too did the party stalwart, to the best of her ability.

Sansom was not alone in her dedication to the party and its “principles.” Even in 1950, when the Progressive Conservative Party was still floundering in the political wilderness, approximately 10,000 women had subscriptions for the Progressive Conservative Women’s Newsletter. As an integral provider of support services to the party, the Progressive Conservative Women’s Association raised money through banquets, luncheons, bazaars, and cook book sales. Their members worked inside riding associations at the federal and provincial

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609 The idea that identities are relational—i.e. that in telling stories about being Tories, wives, mothers, Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, and working against Grits, Socialists, and other such “enemies”—comes from Margaret Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational Network Approach,” *Theory and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 5. (Oct., 1994), 618.


611 Data for Speech Material [n.d]: LAC MG 28 IV-2 Vol. 107 General Correspondence.
levels during elections and the periods in between, performing such vital tasks as voter registration, polling and other clerical work. They organized workshops that highlighted the merits of Conservatism and took their message to the streets in the rural and urban areas in which they lived. Club women shared an acceptance of separate women’s organizations which served a variety of purposes defined as being “domestic,” from traditional auxiliary work to pushing for social action and changes in party policy. As Joan Sangster points out in her study of women on the Canadian left in the first half of the century, “although women’s committees generally remained subject to party control, they were also the living product of women’s perceived needs, their ideas about women’s social role, and even their feelings of oppression.”

The agendas of the women of the left differed starkly from those of Progressive Conservative Women who had no intention of overturning patriarchy or capitalism. Still, club women from across the political spectrum tended to operate from similar convictions about women’s expected domesticity even as they engaged in public life.

Women’s auxiliaries supplied a secure niche for women uncomfortable in the male-dominated political parties but who nonetheless wished to offer support based on traditional female roles. Most volunteer club women viewed politics as an act of love, partisanship, civic duty or part of their responsibility as the wife, mother or daughter rather than a career. Not surprisingly, Lucy Sansom (nee Lucy Waddell) was married to a Progressive Conservative. Her husband, Ernest William Sansom, Lieutenant General and former Commander of the 2nd Canadian Corps, ran as a PC candidate in 1945 and in a 1947 by-election in the federal riding of York-Sunbury (he lost both times).


613 See “The Issues in the York-Sunbury By-Election, Text of an Address by Ernest W. Sansom, Progressive Conservative Candidate, delivered over radio station CFNB, Fredericton, on Friday, September 19, 1947”: LAC MG 30/E537/14. For a short summary of Ernest William Sansom’s contributions during the Second World War, see “‘He’s All Man’: One Soldier Sums up His Commander,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 15 April 1940.
Montreal, his wife was a Conservative of the bleu variety. Her scrapbook contains letters written to her mother, Mary Waddell, from Arthur Meighen on the ubiquity of Liberal propaganda and the many heresies committed by Mackenzie King during the darkest days of the Second World War.

For Sansom, then, Conservatism was as much a political identity as it was an inherited trait. She took up the Tory standard on her own terms in the late 1940s. Images and letters pasted into her scrapbook reveal a slim, brown haired, high-flying woman who mingled with the upper crust of the Progressive Conservative party. Sansom can be seen in more than a dozen pictures in her scrapbook sitting among the leading party women of her day. The ladies were white, most were of Anglo-Saxon descent, and almost all of them are bedecked in hats, fur and pearls. To be sure, most women who belonged to the WPCA were not as wealthy as Sansom and her friends. Many of them were farmers, labourers, and small-town folk who helped form the growing middle class of the postwar period. Still, women’s associations like the WPCA were predominantly the preserve of white, middle-class, Catholic or Protestant women who were privileged enough to dedicate their spare time to what was generally deemed as a respectable cause.

The Conservative party touted the participation of women like Lucy Sansom as citizens in the public realm and encouraged them to take up suffrage organizations’ practices of education, publicity, and lobbying legislators from the relative safety of their gender-segregated

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614 Lucy Sansom was born in Kingston where her father, Dr. John Waddell, was a member of the staff at Queen’s University. She was educated at Miss Bates’ private school in Kingston and later studied music in Paris, France. She married Lt. Gen Ernest Sansom, C.B. DSO, in 1930 and they had three daughters. She was described in the papers as “a slender, brown-haired woman with great charm of manner.” This short biography is taken from newspaper clippings found in Sansom’s scrapbook: LAC MG 30/E 537/20.

615 Arthur Meighen to Mary Waddell, 8 June 1940: LAC MG 30 E537 17.

616 “PC Ladies Have Their Say,” The Toronto Telegram, 16 March 1954.

617 There is an excellent profile of the WPCA woman, Edith Evans, which can be found in the PC Party Fonds. Evans lived on a small farm in rural Alberta and became member of the WPCA in 1945. One can track her progress as she becomes an increasingly confident and effective grassroots political organizer: LAC MG 28 IV-2 Vol. 132 Alberta Women’s Organizer.
clubs.\textsuperscript{618} It had pursued a carrot and stick approach to women’s involvement in party politics since suffrage was won by keeping them working on the sidelines at the grassroots levels. During the interwar years, the Conservatives, Liberals, Farmer and CCF parties paid lip service to the mass of new women voters.\textsuperscript{619} A pamphlet used by the Progressive Conservatives during the 1936 federal election is an apt case-in-point. Printed on bright yellow and red paper and decorated with sketches of women working as homemakers, secretaries, department store clerks and singers, the caption of the pamphlet reads “4 Questions for Canadian Women.” The questions are as follows: “Do you want to use as you choose what you earn in your home: in your shop: in your firm?” “Do you want to choose your work?” “Do you want the highest production at the lowest cost?” “Do you want to be free to buy the special thing that pleases you?” Women who “value freedom,” the pamphlet suggested, would not vote for socialists or Liberal technocrats. On the back of the pamphlet, placed just above the keywords “liberty,” “progress,” and “freedom,” there is an image that mimics human evolution from apes but is actually a profile of six women bent forward and walking in chains.\textsuperscript{620} By emphasizing how their platform contained policies geared towards so-called “women’s issues” such as jobs for their husbands, consumer prices, education, and protection for the elderly, disabled and the poor, the Progressive Conservative party used the “woman question” as a means of garnering female support.\textsuperscript{621} Not surprisingly, emphasis placed on the key concepts of “liberty,” “progress,” and “freedom” as viewed in the context of women’s rights was left vague and unexplained.

After witnessing thousands of women migrate into the paid labour market during and after the Second World War, it was becoming increasingly evident that women were competent

\textsuperscript{618} Nancy Cott makes the connection between the post-suffrage cohort of voluntary party women and the previous generation of maternal feminists. See Cott, \textit{The Grounding of Modern Feminism} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 97.

\textsuperscript{619} Glassford, “‘The Presence of So Many Ladies,’” pp. 20-21.


\textsuperscript{621} Glassford, 22.
beyond the domestic sphere. The wartime emphasis on human rights promoted by the United Nations after its founding in 1945 was invoked by those who strove to improve the status of women in Canadian society. All the talk of human rights and equality, not to mention the prospect of winning over women voters, had an impact on the Tories. After being trounced by Mackenzie King in two consecutive federal elections and almost losing Ontario to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, “progressive” elements of the Conservative party attempted to stave off political ruin at a round table policy meeting at Port Hope. “The Report of the Round Table on Canadian Policy of 1942” included a strong pitch to labour and women as a means of broadening support for the party. At a convention held in Winnipeg later that year, the new “Progressive” Conservative leader, John Bracken, adopted a platform that called for “a genuine new deal for the women of the nation, not merely pious and token concessions.” “It is the policy of this Party,” he proclaimed, “to see that Women are given the opportunity to take their full place in the councils of the nation, in the Cabinet, in the Senate and on government Boards administering public business, where the women of the nation have a substantial interest.” When Diefenbaker ran for federal office in 1957 and 1958, the role of women in the political life of the nation remained a key talking point in the Progressive Conservative platform. A memo from Allister Grosart to the candidates running in 1957 which promised to appoint a

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625 “We accept, without reservation, the full equality of women in the life of the nation…” found under the heading “Employement and Rehabilitation,” Report of the Round Table on Canadian Policy, 1942, p. 3: LAC MG 32/B9/107 Principles and Philosophies.

626 “Data for Speech Material, 1960”: LAC MG 28/IV 2; Vol. 107 General Correspondence.
female Cabinet Minister, bring in more “topflight women candidates,” and develop new material on women’s issues such as pay equity and the baby bonus was designed to show the public that the Progressive Conservative party sought “social and economic justice for women.”

Rather than make any real headway on the issue of gender equality, however, the Conservative party opted instead to grow the women’s auxiliary. As Flora MacDonald puts it, “the Tories began to realize that people were seeing women in a number of places that they hadn’t been before. It was obvious that we were going to have to concentrate far more on encouraging women to work as organizers than we had in the past.” The WPCA was thus instrumental in drawing women into Tory politics while at the same time keeping their activities in the background. The emphasis that National Headquarters placed on its activities, particularly after the Second World War, reveals much about the extent to which the women’s organization was viewed as essential to the machinery of the modern mass political party.

Lucy Sansom took note of the growing responsibilities being handed down to women. “Women are coming to play a more important role in election campaigns,” she declared to an audience of over 500 women in Toronto. To Sansom, women had “always taken part in elections and spoken from public platforms and on the radio and now more are holding the very important position of campaign manager.” “Without the active help of women,” she argued, “Premier Hugh John Flemming would not have won” the premiership of New Brunswick in 1952. Sansom made a point to rationalize the sexual division of labour that existed within the party. She viewed women’s and men’s roles as being complementary to one another and argued that in order to be

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628 Interview with Flora MacDonald, 17 August 2008.
629 Such was the case in the United States and Britain after the Second World War. See, for example, Catherine E. Rymph, Republican Womanhood; Joni Lovenduski, Pippa Norris, and Catriona Burness, “The Party and the Women,” in Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball, Conservative Century: The Conservative Party Since 1900 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994).
630 Fredericton Star Phoenix, 11 December 1954.
successful, the party must preserve the balance between the two sexes. Sansom argued that “men and women should cooperate in politics as they do in their homes.” “It is important,” she maintained, that “men and women cooperate in politics,” because there was “so much one can do that the other can’t do.” “While shaping political policies is not the prerogative of women,” Sansom made it clear that, “women’s influence can still invariably be felt on political aspects in this country.”

She claimed that what was accomplished in New Brunswick in 1952 and in Ontario for Leslie Frost in 1951 and 1955 could be done again across Canada in the next federal election; all that was required was “cooperation between Conservative men and women, some hard work, faith, and self-sacrifice.”

Although Sansom contended that policymaking was the preserve of men, she believed that “being Conservative” was an “attitude of life” shared by both sexes. She cast a wide net over a variety of so-called principles to which Conservative men and women should adhere that could all be traced back to what she called “women’s special interests.” In an article published in *Saturday Night* entitled, “The Possible Course for Conservatism,” a tribute to Quintin Hogg’s *The Case for Conservatism* (1947), Sansom argued that “defining Conservative philosophy means showing what is worth conserving; what has been damaged that must be restored; what is bad that must be reformed.” Conservatives pledged “to restore and conserve the parliamentary form of government; to restore and conserve freedom of the individual from the technocrats; to eliminate waste, extravagance, arrogance and theft; to restore Canada’s role in the “family” of Commonwealth nations; to protect our national symbols and values; and preserve the religious.

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632 *The Leader-Post*, Regina, Saturday 11 June 1955.
634 Sansom, as we have seen, was in contact with Quintin Hogg. Sansom echoes Hogg’s emphasis on the “religious basis of society,” “the organic theory of society,” “authority,” and “country” as the pillars of Tory philosophy in *The Case for Conservatism* (London: Penguin, 1947), pp. 4-5.
basis of society.”^635 By promulgating the Conservative philosophy, Sansom believed that “Conservative women [could] ensure the well-being of the nation as well as the family.” Because, she argued, “the high cost of living, making your husband’s income stretch to meet expenses,” had everything to do with “the decrepit state of democracy, continentalism, and big [Liberal] government.”^636 The dream of a society in which men were secure in stable careers and women in comfortable homes raising children reflected the spirit of the times. It was legitimate for Conservative women to partake in debates about foreign policy, democracy, and economics so long as they spoke to the security and well-being of the family.

By linking specific policy objectives to ideas of womanhood, partisanship, and citizenship Sansom was taking a page out of the play book of her Liberals rivals. Indeed, partisan narratives played a crucial role in the constitution of Progressive Conservative and Liberal women’s identities. Sylvia Bashevkin has shown that in the decades following the Second World War, the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties treated their women’s auxiliaries in much the same way. Leading PCs and Liberals recognized and encouraged women’s clubs to continue providing integral support services at the grassroots level. Women’s clubs were constitutionally recognized with separate membership dues, leadership structures, and internal regulations.^637 However, as the speeches, scrapbooks, correspondence and publications of club women from both parties attest, it is the partisan identity—the feeling of belonging to a group of like-minded partisans, of participating in the political process as members of a team—which motivated women to join traditional political parties.

Partisan narratives provided women with analytical tools they could use to approach contemporary political problems. Literature was dispersed amongst the women’s organizations

in all of the provinces by the National Headquarters of both parties as a means of providing them with ready-made talking points that they could use in group discussions and employ as sales pitches within their communities. Working groups, like one led by Lucy Sansom in New Brunswick, were established among Conservative women so that they could gather together to discuss the party principles laid out by Donald Fleming in the pamphlet, “Distinctive Conservatism.” Another “highly successful School of Politics” was organized by the WPCA of Nova Scotia, where PC women “prepared papers to read and discuss the merits of Conservatism and apply the party’s principles to the everyday problems that impact families.”

In the same vein, a report issued by the Alberta Liberal Women’s Association in 1956 linked Liberalism with idealized conceptions of womanhood: “Liberalism is not just a political party; it is a way of life to be taken with women into everyday living. It has always stood for national and international unity and the betterment of human relations at home, in our own homes, and abroad since its inception, and let us pray that it will always do so.”

Both of the leading political parties encouraged club women to learn the party line as a corporate entity so that instead of pursuing political careers they could work as salesladies and peddle the party brand in the communities in which they lived. As the Liberal MP—George McIlraith— argued in a speech to the National Liberal Women’s Federation in 1953, “… the great Liberal thought that is behind the women of this country should continue to express itself through a great corporate organization of this kind.” The failure of women “to coalesce to the point of gaining corporate expressions and a political education” could “vitiate so much of the effort made by the party to spread the Liberal word.”

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During Sansom’s tenure as National President, the correspondence between the WPCA and Democratic and Republican women of the United States reveals the emphasis placed on club women as “sales ladies” whose job it was to “tell and sell” their partisan platforms, talking points and accomplishments. 641 Their correspondence began in the summer of 1956, at a time when the fortunes of the PC party were beginning to improve and club women were increasingly anxious to do their part. Ruth M. Rolph, the Chairman of Publicity of the WPCA initiated the conversation by soliciting information about the Democratic Women’s Workshop. She proposed that something could be learned by “both sides” if they took the time to “share interests and experiences.” 642 Felice Louria, the Chairman of the Democratic Women’s Workshop, responded by sending a slew of information about the ways in which Democratic women organized in the United States. She discussed in great detail how Democratic Women put together “evening training courses, Lunch N’ Learn programs, and special workshop sessions designed to train interested persons in the techniques of running a campaign.” She added that there was “also work to be done at headquarters such as special mailings to prepare or a clipping file to keep up-to-date” and that the DWC provided some of its ladies “to individual Democratic candidate running for public office in order that a volunteer may receive firsthand experience in campaign work.” 643

Rolph’s collection of Washington Newsletters published by the National Federation of Republican Women suggests that she did not play favourites. 644 From Republican women’s publications, the WPCA women got tips on how to become effective tellers and sellers of the party line. Women were particularly fit for the job, the Republican newsletter argued, for it was

642 Ruth M. Rolph of the WPCA Publicity Department to Felice J. Louria, Chairman, Research Department, Democratic Women’s Workshop, 8 August 1956.
644 See, for instance, the Washington Newsletter Published by the National Federation of Republican Women, March 1956: LAC MG 28/IV-2/Vol. 107.
they who “reared the young with the right kind of values imbedded in them so that as they meet
the problems of life they will always have a certain kind of principle, doctrine, and belief to fall
back on that will help guide them through the rough spots.” It was for this reason “that women
should concern themselves with “Republican values.” Being a Republican woman meant living
according to a certain set of principles and values and ideas about the nation and its place in the
world. It meant soliciting families and friends with a list of talking points that underlined how
the Democratic policy of “containment” was “negative and futile”; how the Democrats sought to
“centralize” the operation of the Federal Government; and how the Democrats raised taxes and
federal spending and implemented controls of wages and prices and promoted a “socialist
agenda.”645 The Republican narrative of the postwar period set the parameters of Republican
womanhood. In peddling that narrative, Republican women could become true partisans. By
referring to the narrative the Republican woman could judge right from wrong, differentiate
black from white and come to know, understand, and make better sense of the political and social
world in which she lived.

Conservative club women employed their partisan narrative in much the same way.
Women like Lucy Sansom were organized and informed. They read the party literature, toed the
party line, and like their male counterparts they walked and sometimes drove for miles in their
communities in order to expound the party philosophy, canvas for potential votes, and recruit
new members to the party. In this capacity they were far from powerless; like Lucy Sansom,
they shaped their ideas of partisan principles to reflect the needs and wants of their communities
and families. They had enough independence to interpret what Conservatism meant in their own
terms, even if the talking points came from National Headquarters. By focusing on the links

645 See “Attention GOP Sales Ladies: These facts are listed for your NFRW Sales Ladies for the GOP—to Tell and
Sell. Mention these positive statements about the Republican party daily to your friends, and neighbors, and
Republicanism will be in the air, everywhere.” Washington Newsletter Published by the National Federation of
between their public responsibilities as extollers and extrapolators of Conservatism and their private lives as wives and mothers, club women could rationalize this publicness. In any case, their political orientation was towards the grand causes of Conservatism rather than the detailed concerns of women themselves.

Unlike her sisters in the women’s auxiliary, the onerous duties of a politicians’ wife in the 1940s and 50s were usually obligatory whether she relished playing the role or not. Yet beyond a passing mention in their husbands’ biographies, little scholarly attention has been paid in Canada to the role politicians’ wives have played in national political life. The lives and times of prominent female politicians and activists have been recounted and major milestones on the road to equality have been noted.\(^\text{646}\) Not surprisingly, the work of politicians’ spouses—women who were deeply entrenched in Canadian political scene for much of their adult lives—is ignored. Perhaps this is because they are viewed, as Margaret Trudeau remarked of her position in 1976, as being “just a rose in my husband’s lapel.”\(^\text{647}\) The political wife might be deemed an ornament, objectified by the popular press and assailed by gossip and speculation. She might also be viewed by the public as a perfect and dutiful political wife, an asset to her husband and his party both on and off the campaign trail. Dutiful or not, the political wife was judged based on her fulfilment of the idealized domestic social norm. Her dexterity in striking a balance between public and private was crucial to her success. This was particularly true in the years immediately following the Second World War, when the tensions between ideas of sex equality and a rhetoric that privileged domesticity were thrown into high relief. It is in this context that Olive Diefenbaker succeeded in becoming a political asset to Diefenbaker and the Progressive Conservative party. The weight of her role as a calm and loyal wife, a subtle and effective

\(^{646}\) Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Sharon Carstairs and Tim Higgins, eds., *Dancing Backwards: A Social History of Canadian Women in Politics* (Winnipeg: Heartland Associations, 2004).

partisan, and as the perfect feminine foil to her energetic and masculine husband reveals as much
about the political as it does about the social climate of the times.

When John G. Diefenbaker stole the political show in 1957, he brought with him onto
centre stage a fresh new personality, his wife and willing political co-star, Olive Evangeline
Diefenbaker. It had been a long time since the spouse of a party leader had taken such an active
role in Canadian politics. Madame St. Laurent had underplayed the role and when R.B. Bennett
and Mackenzie King, bachelors both, were in office the wives of the governors-general served as
stand-ins. Olive Diefenbaker was something new for Canadians. Her “Not-So-Private Life” was
featured as a five-page spread in Maclean’s magazine to introduce the new “First Lady” to the
public. At the time, calling Olive the “First Lady of Canada” would have been somewhat
controversial; the title was not recognized because the Queen and the spouse of the Governor
General took precedence over Prime Ministers’ wives. Yet, as her photograph was taken wearing
a “Tory” blue strapless Chantilly gown styled by Christian Dior and seated in the newly
decorated Prime Minister’s residence, Olive was poised and prepared to perform the duties of
one of Canada’s first political ladies. The role was “wide open” for her, the article declared, but
it was “what a lady could make of it.” “First and foremost,” the article explained, “the First
Lady must offer her husband a centre of calm, no mean feat in itself when a man is embroiled in
political warfare and pressed by decisions of state.” She must also “give advice he respects, lead
the party’s female contingent, sway diplomats, and influence voters all across the country,
especially those women who judge a man by the kind of wife he picks.” Although she had
“definite views on most political issues,” the First Lady was never meant to “air them in public.”
She was “very much aware that everything she said may be given a significance she doesn’t
intend.” “When in public,” Olive said, “I talk more and more on the surface. Of course, that isn’t
true of my husband. He’s been in politics all his life. He knows what he wants to say.” As
politician’s wife, Olive admitted that she had to be “more guarded”: “We don’t make decisions. It isn’t our right to talk about political problems.”

As the Prime Minister’s wife, it was acceptable for Olive to transcend the traditional dichotomy of the public man and private woman. Her “Not-So-Private Life” was justified because she accepted the role of hostess, fashion plate, comfort woman, and, at times, the necessary feminine counterpart to her husband’s masculine image. The sexual division of labour based on the patriarchal primacy of the male breadwinner and the domestic, feminine female was central to her identity as First Lady and wife. It is in this way that the dynamic relationship between John and Olive migrated from the family sphere into that of the political, just as the family’s shared reality was shaped by those concepts and values which derived from thought and action at the public level. The political world in which John and Olive Diefenbaker moved was predicated on the privatization of women into various states of second-class citizenship and containment. It was by privatizing parliamentary wives and their sisters in women’s auxiliaries, relegating them to the pursuit of traditional domestic roles, and institutionalizing their lesser status that gendered ideas of citizenship were defined and redefined in postwar Canada.

In the years immediately following the Second World War, it made sense to draw on traditional gender stereotypes to contain the anxieties that the times provoked. With more women entering the workforce and fathers trying to eke out new roles in the “private” life of the nuclear family, the well worn-economic family strategy based on the patriarchal primacy of the male...

650 For more on the formation of the gendered, “liberal” subject, see the chapter on “The Woman Question” in Ian McKay, Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People’s Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920 (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008); Adele Perry, “Women, Racialized People, and the Making of the Liberal Order in Northern North America,” in Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution, Jean-Francois Constant and Michel Ducharme, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 3-34, 274-297.
breadwinner was easily invoked to provide some continuity in the midst of all the change. The corollary to the traditional role of male breadwinner was the ideal domestic woman—the woman who, in advertisements, movies, popular magazines, novels and on television moved to the suburbs, shopped for vacuums and washing machines, had more than two babies and whose sole purpose in life was to forge family togetherness. “The image of the young woman that emerges from this big, pretty magazine,” Betty Friedan observed in her famous *The Feminine Mystique*, “is young and frivolous, almost childlike, fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies, and home.” The stereotype invokes the images of June Cleaver, Donna Reid, and Harriet Nelson and a normative discourse about women’s roles in society—all of which were products, Freidan argued, of a male-produced popular culture aimed at women.

The American historian Elaine Tyler May was the first to make connections between American family life and constructions of gender and sexuality in the 1950s. May dubs the Cold War an era of “domestic containment” which bound Americans to the home, where “[w]ithin its walls, potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed, where they could contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which post-war women and men aspired.”

Canadian historians have built on May’s idea of domestic containment and applied it to Canada

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where fears of communism and nuclear war positioned families, especially the clean-cut middle-class nuclear family living in their suburban home, as the guardians of morals and normality, and a symbol of Canada’s success as a capitalist nation. As evidenced in the 1950s ad for Heinz Strained Beef Soup in which an image of a young mother holding her infant is paired with the slogan, “The Future in the Circle of Your Arms,” it was believed that by fulfilling one’s domestic responsibilities as a stay-at-home wife, mother and enthusiastic consumer of household goods that the future of the family and the nation was safely in the hands of females.

The links made during the Cold War between the well-being of the family and that of the nation had important implications for Olive. The family-centred culture was more than just the internal reverberation of foreign policy and a manifestation of anticommunist hysteria; it was also the romantic corollary to the dreary legacy of the Depression, the Second World War, and the anxieties surrounding nuclear weapons. At a time when movies, television shows and the popular press popularized the nuclear family as a safe haven in a chaotic world, it was only logical that the good wives—first or otherwise—be put on a pedestal. As in the famous “Kitchen Debate” of 1959, when Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev squared off on the pros and cons of capitalism and socialism, the happy North American housewife was held up as a representative example of a North American standard of living. Top politicians’ wives were used as symbols in much the same way. Women like Mamie Eisenhower and Jackie Kennedy—and to a much less sensationalized extent, Olive Diefenbaker—were portrayed in the media as dutiful wives and mothers, exemplars for a nation of women and the world. It is in this way that

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656 See the ad for Heinz Baby Foods in Maclean’s, 8 June 1957, p. 67.

657 Owram, Born at the Right Time, 12.

658 For an excellent summary of the “Kitchen Debate,” see Karal Ann Marling, As Seen on TV, Ch. 7: “Nixon in Moscow: Appliances, Affluence, and Americanism,” pp. 242-283.
politicians’ wives were able to build up the masculine images of their Presidential husbands at a
time when fears of radicalism, communism “otherness” gripped North America.

John Diefenbaker’s family life did not always meet the prerequisite of marital bliss that
was deemed necessary for high ranking politicians of the day. He did not have any children of
his own and so could not play the role of father figure. And before Olive there was Edna, the so-
called “other Mrs. Diefenbaker,” whose rumoured mental illness and fatal cancer were hidden as
a means of protecting her reputation and that of her husband’s.659 Edna had the thankless task of
seeing her husband through some of the lowest points of his career. Tragically, she died in early
in 1951, just as Diefenbaker’s political star was beginning to rise. Much speculation has been
made about Diefenbaker’s physical and emotional abandonment of Edna and the tunnel vision
which was focused solely on professional advancement.660 What is certain is that Diefenbaker
was a selfish man and high maintenance husband. John Diefenbaker married his second wife,
Olive Freeman, on 8 December 1953. And by all accounts, as hard as Edna might have fought
for his political success, it was Olive, the woman there for the triumphant climax and disastrous
denouement of his political career, who John Diefenbaker considered to be his “true love.”661

During the federal elections of 1957 and 58, Olive was also one of Diefenbaker’s greatest
assets. That Allister Grosart knew as much is evident in the distribution of hundreds of copies of
a black and white photograph taken of John and Olive sitting together on a couch at 24 Sussex
Drive. In the photo, Diefenbaker is gazing at the camera, ostensibly charming the photographer
with one of his tall tales. Olive chose to strike a more intimate pose and adoringly faces her
husband with a smile and a hand touching his thigh.662 They were the quintessential husband and
wife team in both the normative and political sense. As Alan Phillips’ biographical sketch of the

659 Simma Holt, The Other Mrs. Diefenbaker (Toronto: Doubleday, 1982), esp. the “Introduction.”
660 Heather Robertson, More Than a Rose, Ch. 11: “The Three Mrs. Diefenbakers.”
661 It is telling that Diefenbaker dedicated all three volumes of his memoirs to Olive. There are only indirect
references to Edna. See Diefenbaker: One Canada, Vols. 1-3 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975).
662 JGDP MG 01/XII/F/163 Elections-1958.
new First Lady explained, “Olive shared his [Diefenbaker’s] platform, scribbled notes when he missed a name and packed his suitcases. She backed his judgment in making parliament’s supremacy an issue and is credited with his promise not to forget women.”

The television camera caught her poise and impeccable taste in fashion but missed the astuteness of her politicking. Peter Newman observed that while accompanying the Diefenbaker’s across-Canada on his whistle-stop campaigns, “as soon as the train stopped, she’d be off. He’d go in one direction and she’d get her own group around her. I’ll vote for your John,” countless women were overheard telling her.

At every whistle stop along the way and at every public function, whether it was meeting the Queen or the local legion ladies, Olive was dressed impeccably. Before most of her major public appearance, the details of her outfits were recorded and delivered to Allister Grosart at National Headquarters. Grosart sent the information to the major newspapers and the minor ones, too, if the meeting was held in a more provincial location. Sharing the details of Olive’s wardrobe was a public relations initiative. Canadian women were told what Olive was wearing because they were supposed to aspire to be like her—to dress modestly and in feminine garb, to save up and buy that Chantilly lace scarf and contribute to the postwar economy. Olive fully embraced her status as middle-aged fashion plate, along with all the sartorial trappings of consumer culture that came along with it: the pearl choker, the mink coat pulled back to reveal a silk shirtwaist with pleats, a ruffle, and covered buttons, matching pumps, a shiny patent leather

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664 Newman refers here to Diefenbaker’s last campaign as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1965: Interview with Peter Newman 4 April 2007. See also, Interview with Dick Spencer, 9 Dec 2006.
665 See the “Program for Mrs. Diefenbaker,” compiled by Allister Grosart: JGDP XII / Vol. 12/ A/ 404, DC.
666 “Dresses to be worn by Mrs. John G. Diefenbaker on the Occasion of the Queen’s Visit”: JGDP PMO/Vol. 107/1655.
clutch, and a velvet hat with black netting in the front. Texture, contrast, and colour: immaculately dressed, Olive was a walking compendium of the aesthetic principles that governed the market place. She played up to the mythic concepts of Conservative womanhood and peddled that image on television and in the popular press because she believed it was her wifely duty. Diefenbaker’s public relations team traded on the normative discourse of postwar femininity by emphasizing Olive’s comely and sophisticated image as an older, fashion forward parliamentary wife.

Although put on a pedestal to be admired for her fashion sense, calm demeanour, and fulfillment of her duties, like all of the other wives of Conservative Ministers and Members of Parliament, Olive was saddled with the domestic responsibility of “keeping the grass-roots well watered at all times.” According to Grosart’s assistant, Flora MacDonald, the MP’s wife had “a role in the constituency and she realized that she had things to do. Not all of them agreed to it, but most of them did since it was going to help their husbands’ opportunity.” “One of the things that I had to do,” MacDonald recalls, “was to have session with the wives. This would be after the election of over 200 MPs in 1958.” The sessions were designed “to try to make them feel comfortable in Ottawa” because “most of them knew absolutely nothing about Ottawa or Parliament and yet they had to become familiar with the kind of work their husbands did.” “Above all,” the wives were told that “they must never forget the constituency back home, because that, if it was properly handled, would ensure the re-election of their husbands.” At the constituency level they “would set up tea parties and go to

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667 The outfit described above can be seen in a photo of Olive Diefenbaker holding a bouquet and posing with an unidentified woman and girl in Lethbridge, Alberta in 1963. There are many more images in which Olive can be seen dressed in similar attire. MG 01/XVII/JGD 3111 Diefenbaker Centre, Photographs and Slides.

668 See Karal Ann Marling’s depiction of Mamie Eisenhower and her ‘new look.’ Marling, As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday life in the 1950s, Ch. 1 “Mamie Eisenhower’s New Look,” 8-49. For more on Olive as fashion plate, see Heather Robinson, More Than a Rose: Prime Ministers, Wives, and Other Women (Toronto: Seal Books, 1991), 252.

669 Quote taken from Ottawa Comment, February 1958.
people’s houses and bring the whole neighbourhood around to theirs’. They would come to Ottawa and get some sort of understanding of what was going on and then go back and speak about it. It gave them more confidence in what they were doing and what their role was.” “Most of them,” MacDonald makes clear, “weren’t just someone to get up on the stage with their husband’s.”

Indeed, at the very least, the politicians’ wife was an important cog in the party machine; one whose function as a grass-roots organizer, recruiter, fundraiser, gossip-getter, and somewhat knowledgeable party representative was not taken for granted at National Headquarters.

As the wife of the Prime Minister, Olive was responsible for reaching out not only to Diefenbaker’s constituency of Prince Albert, but also to communities across Canada. Yet she had a private role, too—as the wife and confidant of the Prime Minister. Olive’s influence over John Diefenbaker was widely known among his friends and colleagues and vexed some of them to the point that they blamed her for playing a small role in his downfall. “Diefenbaker began to see himself on a par with great leaders of the past and present and future,” recalls Pat MacAdam, one of Allister Grosart’s young protégés at National Headquarters: “it became an unfortunate obsession of his,” and apparently “even more an obsession with his then wife, Olive.” “I think the hundreds of trips he’d make to meet and mingle with the masses instead of performing the necessary drudgeries of office and being a responsible leader… he didn’t have time to do those things,” says MacAdam, “but he did it anyway and Olive encouraged it.”

In some social circles, Olive was held responsible for forcing Diefenbaker to give up alcohol, locking him up, and barring him from engaging in the old-boys networks that were integral to his political

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670 Interview with Flora MacDonald, 17 August 2008.
671 Interview with Pat MacAdam, 19 October 2006
success. “Diefenbaker was a loner,” MacDonald contends, “in an earlier time quite gregarious… he would be one of the buddies in the caucus and so on. But all that changed because of Olive’s origins in the strict religious right… her father was a conservative Valley Baptist from rural Nova Scotia and she grew up in that strain.” MacDonald alleges that Olive would “never allow him [Diefenbaker] to speak to unmarried people. Any woman who took a drink was damned to hell. She was very much, ‘you’ve got to be seen as morally correct in everything,’ and that meant [staying away from] all these strange unwanted and unwashed people around him…”

Perhaps MacDonald’s self consciousness as a single woman who moved in a “man’s world” rendered her more sensitive to Olive Diefenbaker’s critical gaze. It could be, too, that Olive was jealous of the younger woman for her ability to enter the political fray in ways that a First Lady could not. In any case, it is obvious from the stories told by so many of her contemporaries that Olive wielded a lot of power behind closed doors. And as Diefenbaker’s popularity waned and his authority over the party unravelled, it became easy for his enemies to vilify her. No longer perceived as a submissive wife, rumour had it that Olive was a manipulative and authoritative one. Stories that Diefenbaker was becoming weak and decrepit also began to surface. It was said that he suffered from Parkinson’s disease, was deaf and perhaps even mentally ill. To this day Peter Newman believes that Diefenbaker suffered from epilepsy. According to Doug Fisher, the CCF Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay, the gossip was encouraged by the “clever devils” of the Liberal opposition to “emasculate Diefenbaker.” Peeling the veil of innocence off of Olive and undermining Diefenbaker’s image

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672 Interview with Pat MacAdam, 19 October 2006; Interview with Peter C. Newman 4 April 2007. See also, Denis Smith, Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker (Toronto: MacFarlane and Ross, 1995), pp. 195-196.
673 Flora MacDonald Interview, 7 December 2006.
as a virile nation-builder was, as Fisher put it, “all too easy.”\textsuperscript{675} That rumours like these persisted behind the scenes until well after Diefenbaker’s fall from power reveals much about the chauvinistic political environment in Ottawa at the time. In the end, as he watched his list of political friends dwindle and sink into what many viewed as a quagmire of intense paranoia, Diefenbaker knew that he could still trust Olive. “My wife is here with me,” he said, “as she has been through the bright days as well as the times of difficulty.”\textsuperscript{676}

Parliamentary wives and their segregated sisters in the women’s auxiliary developed a commitment to the party’s success which led them to accept compromise and negotiation when it came down to women’s roles as fundamental to a vital party and to functioning political system. Women like Olive Diefenbaker and Lucy Sansom did not face the quandary of choosing between partisan loyalty and the pursuit of sex equality. Because they safely straddled the lines of public and private and engaged in politics as wives or as part of a segregated women’s auxiliary, they were spared from having to justify women’s pursuit of power in a so-called “man’s world.”

In contrast, women who sought to exert power from inside the Progressive Conservative party and take their places in the electoral and legislative halls of the nation were forced to grapple with what Nancy Cott calls the “double consciousness of oneself as a woman and a professional.”\textsuperscript{677} Women who chose to establish their careers within the sex-ordered, patriarchal world of the traditional political party in the years following the Second World War constantly grappled with the tension between these two poles of identification. The strain caused by social pressures to conform to traditional gender roles and the desire to take up active, public positions in the everyday functioning of the party informed the ways that integrated “party women”

\textsuperscript{675} Interview with Doug Fisher, 6 December 2006.
\textsuperscript{676} Speech delivered at Prince Albert, 8 April 1963: JGDP Series XII Personal and Confidential/Vol. 59.
\textsuperscript{677} Nancy Cott, \textit{The Grounding of Modern Feminism}, pp. 232-3.
engaged with each other, the women of the WPCA, their male counterparts, and in the public sphere more generally.

As much as party women sought to disassociate their vocational aims from those of feminism in order to prove that their first loyalty was to the Progressive Conservative party, they could not escape the “woman question.” Unlike club women, who viewed their political activism through the lens of maternal feminism and so emphasized the unique contributions that they could make to the public sphere as part of the segregated women’s club, party women refused to make a special case for themselves. As Margaret Conrad has observed of Ellen Fairclough, PC Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister in the Diefenbaker government, party women were “schooled in equal rights feminism.”678 Theirs was a liberal feminism that asserted the equality of men and women through political and legal reform. They asked not for special privileges as women but to be treated as equals and professionals in the House of Commons and within the Progressive Conservative party. The tensions inherent in the relationship between maternal and liberal feminists of the PC party during Diefenbaker’s tenure reveal much about how contemporary social pressures on white, middle class women influenced ideas of Conservatism and Conservative womanhood in the postwar period. The decade immediately following the Second World War was, as Christie and Gauvreau put it, “a complex mediator between older institutional patterns and values and the supporters ‘modernity’ of the late 1950s.”679 The elements of continuity and the often subtle new departures that frequently underlay ideas about women’s roles bring to light the ways that women chose to pursue their political goals in postwar Canada.

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678 Margaret Conrad, “Not a Feminist but…”: The political career of Ellen Louks Fairclough, Canada’s First Female Federal Cabinet Minister,” Journal of Canadian Studies, Peterborough: Summer 1996: Vol. 31, Iss. 2, 13.
That the Second World War marked a turning point for women was not lost on Diefenbaker’s newly minted Secretary of State, Ellen Fairclough. During a luncheon meeting at the Empire Club in December 1957, Fairclough informed the audience that “the First World War brought women out of their homes to work in industry and commerce, taking the places of the men who had joined the armed forces. The Second World War brought them out in still greater numbers and this second time there was evident reluctance to return to domestic duties.”

Recently, the idea that women retreated from the workforce and public life after the Second World War that was popular among historians in the 1980s has been challenged by Jeff Keshen. His research shows that many women remembered the war as a time of personal liberation. Fairclough made much the same argument by providing statistical proof that the public sphere was no longer the preserve of men. She notified her listeners that “the number of women in gainful occupations in Canada multiplied almost five times in the half-century from 1901 to 1951. The number of working women increased from 238,000 to 1,147,000 and the proportion to every 1000 males gainfully employed rose from 154 to 282.” Fairclough did not pretend that women were being admitted to the upper levels of government, fast becoming the heads of corporations, or even receiving equal pay for the same work as their male counterparts. Still, she believed that, at mid-century, “the acceptance of women as workers has altered our whole scheme of living...women have become free for new responsibilities in industry and commerce and have naturally sought a voice in government.”

To Fairclough, the decade immediately following the Second World War marked a point at which women would slowly begin to take their place alongside men as citizens and

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contributors to national political life. Yet such ideas about achieving sex-equality, however far in the future, were not always well-received. Polls and commentary in the popular media about the prospect of encouraging women working outside the home reveal the existence of deep anxieties over the new wartime and postwar roles assumed by women. The CBC radio show, “Servicemen’s Forum,” for example, organized a debate on the subject of “Women After the War,” during which opinions from all sides were aired on the subject of whether women should be encouraged to leave their wartime jobs and resume their roles in the home after the war, or if they should be allowed to continue in those jobs and be paid the same amount as their male colleagues. While one commentator argued that women should be able to continue working outside their homes and for equal pay, the next pundit contended that women should be hired only to perform “tedious jobs” in the textile industry, housekeeping or electrical because they performed better in those lines of work than men. Another pointed out that women were “less serious” than men in their jobs and that they were better suited to the responsibilities they had in the home. Still another suggested that the output of men and women had to constantly be measured before it could be determined whether or not they should be given equal pay.682 Debates like these over women’s “proper place” in postwar society reveal the extent to which ideas of womanhood were in flux at the time. The fault lines they generated could not remain dormant for long and inevitably made themselves felt within the Progressive Conservative party of the day.

The same mixed attitudes regarding women’s roles in the public life of the nation were apparent in the PC Party’s treatment of its small contingent of women candidates. Although the party focused on recruitment to the WPCA as a means of stimulating interest and activity among that nation’s women, it also made a concerted effort to recruit professional women to run for

682 CBC Radio, Servicemen’s Forum, Guests: Barbara Ellis, Alison Lindsey, Helen Merrell, Alex Phillips, Roy Robertson; Moderator Donald C. McDonald; Broadcast date 22 March 1945.
office. This was particularly true when the party was farthest from power in the mid 1940s and early 1950s. Female PC candidates were actively recruited by both John Bracken and George Drew. In the federal election of 1953, the Progressive Conservatives and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation had 10 women candidates each while the governing Liberal party trailed with only 3.  

During the federal election of 1953, the PC party made room for a live “Team Broadcast” on the CBC that was put together by its top female candidates: Ellen Fairclough, Lorraine Johnston, Margaret Aitken, Winnifred Stokes, and Sybil Bennett. In the broadcast, Fairclough addressed the problem of women’s involvement in Canadian politics head on. “From time to time,” she argued, “the various political parties of Canada have made overtures to women through high-sounding resolutions adopted at conventions and annual meetings. Usually these resolutions assured women that they were highly regarded in party circles and that the party would see that they had equal opportunity and equal rights in all party matters.” But for Fairclough and the female voters to whom she appealed, “the proof of the pudding is in the eating and only the Conservative party has actually done anything more than bestow a casual nod on aspiring nomination candidates.” She argued that it was the PC Party which encouraged the recruitment of high caliber female candidates who were “experienced women in public affairs… hard-working intelligent persons, well informed on the issue of the day and seasoned campaigners.” All of them had “won their nominations on the strength of their personal qualifications” and not, it was inferred, because of their sex. Margaret Aitken and her colleagues followed with a pointed discussion of the nation’s current affairs, from the dismal

683 Three of those Progressive Conservative women (Fairclough, Aitken, and Bennett) and one Liberal (Ann Shipley) were elected as Members. See “History of Federal Ridings Since 1867—Women Candidates in General Elections, 1921 to Date,” Parliament of Canada: http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Sites/LOP/HFER/HFER.asp?Language=E&Search=WomenElection.

684 “Progressive Conservative Team Broadcast by Mrs. Ellen Fairclough, Miss Margaret Aitken, Miss Lorraine Johnston, Miss Winnifred Stokes, Miss Sybil Bennett, Trans Canada Network C.B.C. 10:30-11pm, EDT July 22nd 1953”: LAC MG 28 IV-2 Vol. 109 Speeches Margaret Aitken.
state of Parliament to fiscal policy, trade deficits, the public welfare, and the Liberal
government’s tendency to eschew Canada’s connections to the British Empire. In making their
pitch—purportedly to female voters—on the fine points of Progressive Conservatism, Aitken,
Fairclough, and their colleagues did not emphasize the uniqueness of their contribution as
females and avoided any talk of women’s “special interests.” They focused instead on promoting
the party line and argued that they deserved to win their seats based on individual merit.

While the PC party encouraged its women candidates to team up to attract women to the
party and extol its virtues in the heat of a federal election, it was under the tacit assumption that
they would disassociate their professional goals from the aims of women as a group.685 However,
there were many other reasons why professional women might refuse to make a special case for
women on their own terms. In “Not a Feminist, But…,” Margaret Conrad examines the logic
behind Ellen Fairclough’s eschewing of the feminist label. Fairclough was not a feminist, as
Conrad notes, in the sense that she perceived herself as part of a social grouping of women that
acted to compel change.686 According to Conrad, Fairclough “embraced new notions of
womanhood” and shed her traditional, Methodist upbringing and the kind of “maternal feminism
that would have crippled her material and occupational advancement.”687 She was married and
had a child, yet economic circumstances and personal ambition drove her to work in the male-
dominated field of accounting and open up her own practice in the late 1930s.688 Her interest in
the Progressive Conservative party stemmed not from joining the WPCA but from her
membership in Hamilton’s Young Progressive Club. She dabbled in municipal politics in the

685 Nancy Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, 233.
686 Conrad, 8.
687 Ibid., 5.
688 The Depression sparked a crisis with regards to gender roles as scores of women joined the paid labour force.
Margaret Hobbs, “Rethinking Antifeminism in the 1930s: Gender Crisis or Workplace Justice? A Response to Alice
Kessler-Harris,” Gender & History 5.1 (Spring 1993), 4-15; Conrad, 7; See also Reginald Whitaker, The
Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-58 (Toronto: University of
late 1940s until she won the position as constituent for the PC party and defeated her Liberal opponent in a by-election for the seat in Hamilton West. Consequently, Fairclough’s identity as a Progressive Conservative woman stemmed from her experience as a co-ed and professional. Although she promoted freedom from sex-defined constraints and equality in the workplace, Fairclough also worked hard to emphasize the policy initiatives that she pursued which had nothing to do with women’s “special interests.” In so doing, she could claim loyalty to the Progressive Conservative cause and satisfy its male partisan priorities while cautiously pursuing a piecemeal agenda for greater gender equality.

In any case, Fairclough’s political goals were not animated by a sense of the wrongs done to women. In speeches delivered on the topic of “Canadian Women as Citizens,” she argued that gender should be left out of the equation altogether. When she was asked by the President of the Empire Club of Canada late in 1956 to speak on the issue of women’s approach to the problems of government, for instance, Fairclough replied that “I have long held the view that there is no difference in one’s approach to the problems of business or state because of one’s sex.”

But there was, of course, a difference—Fairclough was a woman, after all. She noted that while the male MPs could get their hair cut on the hill for free women always had to pay. She complained about how women MPs had to climb two stories to use the restroom while there were plenty for men outside the caucus chamber. She could not attend cabinet meetings at the Rideau Club because it was closed to women. Fairclough shared one particular instance of chauvinism in her interview with Stursberg. After the young, and, as it turns out, innocent Steven Truscott was being tried and convicted for the murder of Lynn Harper, he was sentenced to hang at the old Goderich Gaol. Diefenbaker called his Cabinet together to discuss whether or

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691 Interview with Peter Stursberg, 9 March 1973, p. 17-18. For more on the obstacles that confronted Fairclough on account of her gender, see Conrad, 10.
not to mitigate the punishment. “You could almost cut the feeling with a knife,” Fairclough remembered, “and finally Dief said, ‘Ellen, I am sorry but would you please retire’ because they were examining pictures of the girl who was raped and murdered.” When Stursberg informed Fairclough that one of her Cabinet colleagues claimed that she wept over the matter, she asked him to set the record straight by denying the claim: “Please don’t say that I wept, because that is one of the things that people expect women to do and it is something that I never did at any time.” It is telling that Fairclough refused to label the incident as a case of discrimination.

Instead, she said to Stursberg defensively, “I had served on committees in City Council where I listened to some pretty lurid things and this wouldn’t have bothered me but my reaction to that, I can tell you this quite frankly was one of puzzlement, wondering what it was all about but also subsequently one of some amusement that men in a position of running the country should be so namby-pamby about discussing things in front of a woman that I just shook my head.”

Fairclough was reluctant to discuss the gender discrimination that she faced throughout her political career. Clearly she sometimes found life as a public, party woman difficult and was sometimes bothered by it. Yet she believed that she was anybody’s equal. That was her personal and political starting point.

Fairclough never overstepped the boundaries of propriety when it came to pushing for equality over party loyalty. Charlotte Whitton, however, stood out in stark contrast as a Conservative woman who did. Although she maintained important ties with the WPCA, Imperial Order Daughters of Empire, Women’s Christian Temperance Union as well as other segregated women’s organizations, Whitton was an advocate of women’s full integration in the public life of the nation. Her determination to take up a professional role in the public service was evident

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693 Fairclough’s fellow MP, Margaret Aitken, felt much the same way: “[w]hen you find a strong candidate, what difference if the pants are warn on the inside or on the outside?” Margaret Aitken with Byrne Hope Sanders, Hey Ma! I Did It (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1953) 36; pp. 41-42.
in her early career as a social worker. Her accomplishments and ability were recognized in 1920 when she was appointed as the director of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare. In this capacity she served on the Child Welfare Committee at the League of Nations convention in Geneva in 1925. In 1932 she worked for R.B. Bennett’s Conservative government to conduct reports on welfare relief in the midst of the Great Depression. After resigning her position in 1941, Whitton set out on the public lecture circuit and led a crusade for equal rights for women in the workplace—although her small ‘c’ conservatism shone through as she advocated against liberal divorce laws and working mothers. In 1951, she became a fixture in Ottawa municipal politics when she took up the role of the first woman mayor of a major Canadian city.

During her stint as Mayor of Ottawa, Whitton was never friendly towards George Drew. However when Diefenbaker won the leadership in 1956—they had been correspondents and friends as early as 1949—Whitton announced her retirement and decided seek a nomination for the Progressive Conservative seat in Carleton County, Ottawa. Not surprisingly, she was roundly defeated by the national director of the Conservative Party, Richard A. Bell. Rumours abounded that Whitton did not have the full support of John Diefenbaker because he thought that she could be a political liability. Yet Whitton thought otherwise—she believed that she was at a distinct disadvantage because she was a woman. When she ran for the nomination for the riding of Ottawa West in December, 1957, Whitton was adamant that the women of the WPCA should be allowed to vote for her at the nominating convention. At the time, members of the WPCA were barred from voting at nominating conventions except “by courtesy.” That year they

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694 CBC Archives, “First Big City Woman Major,” CBC News Roundup, 2 October 1951.
695 Although Whitton also worked for Mackenzie King in a similar capacity, her small ‘c’ conservatism and opinions about public welfare were more in line with those of Bennett. Bennett and Whitton were close friends and confidants until his death in 1947. See also P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton A Feminist on the Right (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987), 85.
696 Whitton to Diefenbaker, 8 June 1949: LAC MG 30/E256/Vol. 81.
had even been prevented from moving or seconding motions or voting at executive meetings.\textsuperscript{698}

In defiance of the PC party and its patriarchal tradition, Whitton suggested that she would run her own convention—one consisting entirely of Women and the Young PC Association members which resented their secondary status within the party.\textsuperscript{699} The West Ottawa WPCA, a long-time supporter of Whitton, agreed to this and announced it would hold its convention on 24 February 1958. Sensing that the disagreement would make for some bad press, Allister Grosart folded to the women’s demands and allowed them to vote at the association convention. Whitton won the nomination but was later defeated by her prominent Liberal opponent, George McIlraith, by a little over one thousand votes.

Whitton felt betrayed by Diefenbaker and other prominent members of the PC party who called on her to whip up the women’s vote when it suited them but remained lukewarm in their public support of her candidacy. It is for this reason that she honed in on the gender disparities within the party. She described herself as “a Tory dyed in the wool and several yards wide.”\textsuperscript{700} Her family had a history of Conservatism and her socially conservative views on welfare, working mothers, and liberal divorce laws were well known.\textsuperscript{701} Indeed, Whitton’s negative views of immigrants not from Britain, refusal to support the most basic social welfare measures, open religiosity, imperialism, and failure to encourage working mothers are often viewed as running in the face of her feminist pretensions.\textsuperscript{702} But she was, as Rooke and Schnell have dubbed her, “a feminist on the right.” Her unique feminism was a product of her conservatism and her partisan, Conservative identity.


\textsuperscript{699} WPCA of Ottawa West to Allister Grosart, January 6, 1958: LAC MG 30 E256 Vol. 81.

\textsuperscript{700} Whitton to Victor Lauriston, 30 May 1957: LAC MG 30/ E256/Vol. 87.

\textsuperscript{701} Whitton to Diefenbaker, 8 June 1949: LAC MG 30/E256/Vol. 81.

\textsuperscript{702} For Whitton’s views on women in society, see, Charlotte Whitton, “Women a Necessary Evil,” a speech written in 1950: LAC MG 30/E256/Vol. 84; Charlotte Whitton, “Progressive Conservatism and the Public Welfare, 1944”: LAC MG 30/E245/Vol. 81.
Whitton’s view of gender equality was tied up in the Conservative narrative of the 1950s. In speeches delivered and articles published at the height of her interest in federal politics, such as, “The Decay of Democracy,” “I Know What I Want for My Country But Not Where to Find It,” “What Price, Canada?” and “Government of the People and By the People—including Females,” she combined partisan calls for the primacy of Parliament, the end of Liberal technocracy, “creeping fascism,” and the forging of new ties with the Commonwealth with demands for greater gender equality. For Whitton, in the face of the Soviet threat, allowing women to wallow in their own laziness and to stunt their growth as patriots and as full participants in the public sphere weakened the very fabric of the nation. She believed that women had not yet entered fully into their heritage of political responsibility and could not do so until they learned the art of self-government through political action and organization.

The patriarchal structure of traditional political parties was, a Whitton saw it, partially to blame for the failure of women to achieve full citizenship. “It is not that Canadian women lack energy, will power, readiness, even anxiety about their day and their government’s (and party’s) place in it,” she claimed, “it is simply that they are not encouraged to do more in their party and political set up than actually forage about, beating up food, working up memberships, staging the odd social function and, come election time, slaving like navvies.” Whitton took aim, in particular, at segregated women’s auxiliaries within mainstream political parties:

> In hundreds of thousands, Canada’s free and intelligent women staff committee rooms, make up miles of mailing lists, address envelopes from morning till night, glue themselves to the telephone receivers, tramp the city streets and apartment stairs, preaching the gospel of their party, the evangel of their candidates. Theirs is not to reason why or who or what starts, oils, and keeps all this ‘machine’ going. By and large, all across this country the pattern of women’s participation in the organized political parties and political life generally is just a ‘party piece.’

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In Whitton’s eyes, the designation of gendered places for men and women within the Progressive Conservative party, and national politics more generally, formed the basis of women’s inferior status as citizens. Although her social conservatism set her apart from the liberal feminism of the Second Wave, Whitton’s attack on the segregated women’s auxiliary was a direct challenge to the status quo. In this she stands in stark contrast to the party women like Ellen Fairclough, parliamentary wives like Olive Diefenbaker, and club women like Lucy Sansom, who shied away from gender politics and opted instead to focus on the telling and selling of the Conservative party program.

In the two decades which followed the Second World War, Whitton’s defiance of traditional, male dominated party politics was an aberration. In the 1940s and 50s, most Conservative women did not conceive of challenging the patriarchal structures of mainstream political parties. Found primarily in grassroots work but rarely in leadership, the club women of the WPCA in particular had developed a style of political participation shaped by local contexts, class, culture, and family. The roles they played conformed with historic and modern constructions of patriotic manhood and exalted motherhood as icons of nationalist ideology. Like the maternal feminists before them, the post-suffrage cohort of Conservative club women rationalized their activities in the public sphere by operating in accordance with contemporary ideas of women’s expected domesticity and inherent morality. They found their best hope for civic participation lay in segregated women’s organizations and they believed that women’s involvement in partisan politics was the best means of spreading the Conservative word, maintaining its integrity, and improving the party’s political fortunes in the postwar period.

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Of course there were Conservative women in the 1940s and 1950s who engaged directly with questions of women’s equality even as they eschewed the feminist label, and Whitton was one of them. They ran for public office, sought out key positions within the mainstream of the party organization, and actively took part in discussing women’s roles in public life even as they affirmed their loyalty to the Conservative party narrative. Whitton and Fairclough adopted bits of the doctrine of modern feminism which were compatible with their own ideas of what a Conservative woman should be and what she should do. Yet while Whitton publicly challenged the party’s segregationist policies and called for the granting of full membership for women, Fairclough developed a commitment to the party’s success that led her to accept compromise and negotiation for the good of the party and her political career.

Whether they were club women, parliamentary wives, or cabinet ministers, women who played an active role in the revival of Conservatism in the postwar period generally lacked access to the upper echelons of the Progressive Conservative party. Yet in their respective capacities within and outside the mainstream party organization, they were active agents who helped fashion, articulate, and successfully peddle Conservative party principles and shape the political agenda from the grassroots to the national level. With the exception of Whitton, they viewed their political activism as a positive step towards the advancement of the Conservative women’s agenda. Conservatism was the lens through which they viewed Canada, its place in the world, and defined their own political identities. It dictated Lucy Sansom’s steadfast loyalty to God, Queen and Commonwealth, freedom of the individual, “family values,” auxiliary activism and an ideology of separate spheres that operated from convictions about women’s roles in the home. It shaped Fairclough’s insights into relationships of power, the significance of gender, and the suitability of feminism as a vehicle for female emancipation. Their associations with the

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708 Margaret Conrad makes this case, too, in “Not a feminist” 2.
Progressive Conservative party did not render them trapped in some sort of political purgatory between the First and Second Waves of Feminism. Fairclough, Diefenbaker, and Sansom were all, in their own ways, Conservative partisans. And in the late 1950s, at the very moment in which the nation faced problems in historical self-understanding due to the rise of religious and ethnic pluralism, Soviet Communism, American imperialism, the end of empire, and growing flux with regards to traditional gender norms — that is exactly what they wanted to be.
6—Diefenbaker and the “New Commonwealth”

After Diefenbaker became Prime Minister on 21 June 1957, his vision of Canada’s identity and role in the world was soon made manifest on the international stage. One month after taking office he travelled to London for the Commonwealth Prime Minister’s Conference and delivered a speech at the Dominion Day Dinner on “Canada and the Commonwealth.”

“I am happy to be here in London,” he gushed, “at the heart and fountain head of the Commonwealth of Nations, to meet in the shadow of the Mother of Parliaments other creators and guardians of those traditions of freedom that are based on the concept of the dignity of the human person, the respect for the rule of Law and all those things which under Her Majesty the Queen unite us in whatever part of this Commonwealth is our home.” In this new postwar era there were many Canadians, Diefenbaker informed his audience, who could not count Britain as their ancestral home. Although they could not be “British,” he said, “those people, whatever their racial origin, yield to no man in their loyalty to the Crown and the value that they attach to the Commonwealth and all that it means.” The Commonwealth was the “creator of new, independent nations which themselves have become the bulwarks of Freedom, endowed with their own individualities, traditions, and aspirations.” It united them all “under the headship of the Crown and in their common dedication to Freedom.” In its transformation from a colonial empire into a “federation of free nations,” the Commonwealth was “a model for the other international institutions that followed.” “The mission for Freedom of the Commonwealth has just begun,” Diefenbaker declared, but it would never “change its mandate of freedom and diversity of form.”

Diefenbaker’s language belonged to the nineteenth century, but his vision of the Commonwealth was relatively new. His rhetoric and external policies were conceived as part of a larger, transnational movement to adapt the old British Empire to an increasingly nationalist age and acknowledge the shift from ideas of Britishness based on “race” towards the new reality of ethnic pluralism within the Commonwealth. He placed his faith in the values of British parliamentary democracy and its invocation of the language of “right,” refusing to believe men of goodwill could make other ideological choices. In the fight against the worldwide spread of communism, his focus was not on law or institutions but on an idea of third-world development which emphasized interpersonal relationships between rich and poor powers and the transformation of men’s minds and souls. The “senior” Commonwealth countries would guide these new nations from infancy to maturity, preventing instability and revolution and ensuring that they developed into sound and stable liberal democracies. Implicit in his idea of the Commonwealth was a conception of imperial internationalism and moral rearmament that would save the values of freedom from new totalitarian enemies, and, at the same time, guard against undue American influence in Canada. As a member of NATO and the United Nations, Canada was expected to fall into line behind the United States. For Diefenbaker, however, in its role as a leading Commonwealth nation Canada was more than a middle power. In some circles it was viewed as the seat of a renewed British Empire.

While ideas of Britishness and empire were central to the English Canadian identity in the 1940s and 50s, there are few books written specifically about how these variants of imperialism fit within a wider, transnational context. On the one hand, political and diplomatic historians have shown how strong loyalties to British values and institutions cut across partisan lines. Robert Bothwell, John English, Norman Hillmer and others have examined the role that successive Liberal governments played in remaking the Commonwealth as an instrument of “soft
power” liberal internationalism. Noting that no amount of sympathy could have staved off British imperial decline, these studies accomplish the difficult task of explaining the complex motives and policy decisions behind the shift of Canadian politics and thought away from Britain and towards the United States. More work needs to be done, however, on the thinking of imperialists for whom this continental turn seemed far from inevitable and the extent to which their attempts to breathe new life into the Commonwealth should be viewed as part of a larger, transnational movement.

Cultural and intellectual historians have, on the other hand, only partially filled the gap in their efforts to explain the thinking of imperialists caught up in the transformation of the English-speaking Canadian identity from ideas based on ethnic definitions of Britishness to a rights-based conception of citizenship in the postwar period. José Igartua and Phillip Massolin examine the battles fought between Grits and Tories for the English Canadian imagination and come to similar conclusions about the outcome. In these latest iterations of Canada’s journey from colony to nation, Tories of the postwar period are portrayed as being bent on reaffirming Anglo-Saxon superiority, resuscitating a dying British Empire, and staving off the inexorable forces of progress and modernity. Liberal nationalists of the postwar period are portrayed, conversely, as protagonists who shed the anglophilia of their youths to become anti-imperialists.

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and proponents of a “new Canadian nationalism.” A revisionist historian, C.P. Champion, has worked hard to refute these claims. He suggests that celebrated Liberal nationalists such as Lester B. Pearson were really Britons in disguise whose values of liberal democracy and internationalism were essentially conservative. Although he criticizes Igartua’s partisan labels, Champion’s study draws equally arbitrary lines between proponents of empire and liberal internationalism, perpetuating a false dichotomy in the postwar period between Conservatives and Liberals who shared many of the same ideas about liberal internationalism even if they differed on the details. All of these recent studies shed much needed light on the formation of collective identities at the root of English Canadian representations of nationhood. Regardless of the angle they take on Tories, Grits, and the meaning of Britishness, however, their tendency to view political discourse in a vacuum prevents us from understanding the extent to which geopolitical circumstances and the migration of ideas played a role in shaping postwar rhetoric and foreign policy.

Visions of Canada and its place in the postwar world cannot be divorced from prevailing currents of thought being voiced abroad about the new international order and the tensions being placed on it by the Cold War. Like many of his contemporaries in Britain and the other former white settler colonies, Diefenbaker’s high-flown rhetoric and his external policies were born out of a combination of liberal internationalist conceptions of empire and soft power and more traditional, nineteenth century ideas of imperialism. Recent scholarship has explored the variants of imperialism and internationalism which, in the promotion of interstate cooperation and

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stability through the League of Nations and early incarnations of the United Nations, aimed to make the world safe for empire. If soft power, first world paternalism, and liberal internationalism were at the cutting edge of this new world order, then so too was the Commonwealth as it was conceived by Diefenbaker and his contemporaries for whom liberalism was not incompatible with empire. His idea of Canada and the Commonwealth must be viewed as being part of a world in which the question as to whether the great powers could preserve European colonial rule was up for grabs; when the imperial internationalism of the early twentieth century sought to reconcile the interests of the British Empire with the preservation of its civilizing mission; and when the United States, the world’s mightiest economic and military power, was embarking on a policy of “reconstruction” and “rehabilitation” in Europe and Asia.

The postwar world that Diefenbaker inhabited had not dispensed with empire. The symbolic and ceremonial aspects of the British monarchy and the familial Commonwealth connection had been ratcheted up to provide historic continuity at a time of unprecedented change. Churchill’s call to arms of Britain’s Empire beyond the seas was still fresh in the minds of English Canadians irrespective of partisan loyalties, class, and gender. He had been returned to office in time for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II—an event that made front-page news for over a week in newspapers across Canada as throngs gathered together in public places in towns, cities, and in front of their television sets to celebrate the glamorous new monarch. Regiments of Commonwealth and colonial troops marched in procession to Westminster Abbey, as Louis St. Laurent and the prime ministers of the other Dominions, India,

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717 The Coronation of “Canada’s New Queen” was documented at length on CBC Television News, 2 June 1953. On the same day of the coronation, the Queen received word that the Union Jack had been planted on Everest by two Britons. “Queen Awakened, Told of Coronation Victory,” The Globe and Mail, 2 June 1953.
and heads of state from various colonial protectorates waited in the Abbey. Such high-flown ceremonials overshadowed the problem of imperial overstretch, Indian independence, and questions surrounding the immorality of empire and the global relevance of the Commonwealth. A new Elizabethan age seemed just around the corner. In times like these it is no wonder that Diefenbaker saw a world of opportunity for Canada within a new, collaborative, and seemingly progressive liberal-imperial framework.

The shrill pitch of debates surrounding Canada’s connection to the Commonwealth and the Monarchy is, as Phillip Buckner and other scholars of empire have recently shown, best viewed in the context of Great Britain’s decline. The pomp and ceremony surrounding Elizabeth II’s coronation might have papered over the declining influence of Britain in global affairs and succeeded in romanticizing the old empire, but the celebration was short lived. By 1953, the climate of international opinion had hardened against the perpetuation of colonial rule. In a world in which Whitehall could no longer support the doctrine of the European right to rule, the only sort of British Empire that could exist was one of collaboration with the emerging postcolonial world. The Commonwealth had to change in order to survive, but British leaders began to ask themselves whether bargaining with new members from Asia and Africa was worth the effort. Caught in a fundamental imbalance between their resources and global pretensions, the British had to decide whether to join with Western Europe, pursue closer relations with the growing Commonwealth, or embrace a junior partnership with the United

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States.\footnote{721} The crisis was one not just of realpolitik but also of identity. For centuries the British had been a maritime people linked by trade and markets to diverse and far-flung colonies. The vision of the British as a providential people, summoned by a higher power to fight for freedom against slavery, good against evil was essential to the traditional imperialist identity.\footnote{722} By the late 1950s, the questions raised by imperial decline had caught up to the Conservative British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, and he would be forced to answer them.

As the first Conservative Canadian Prime Minister to be faced with the prospect of the end of empire, John Diefenbaker was caught in a similar quandary. His Conservative predecessors, Robert Borden and R.B. Bennett, had both functioned within the still recognizable imperial structure of the British Empire of 1914-1939.\footnote{723} By the late 1950s, however, there was no mistaking the extent to which Great Britain’s power was in steady, global decline both economically and militarily. The process of decolonization that started with the British withdrawal from India and Pakistan in 1947 and in the next year from Ceylon, Burma, and Palestine would eventually compel imperial troops to leave their posts across Europe, Asia, and Africa. Yet, while there were a number of prophets who foresaw Britain’s decline in the interwar decades, in the years immediately following the Second World War no one really knew when and how far the old empire would fall.\footnote{724}

For decades before Diefenbaker won the prime ministership, the Liberal party had been grappling with the problem of decolonization and its impact on foreign and domestic policy.

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\footnote{722} For more on British imperial identities, see Andrew Gamble, Tony Wright, Anthony Wright, \textit{Britishness: Perspectives on the British Question} (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2009).


When Mackenzie King extricated himself from the Department of External Affairs after the Second World War, Lester B. Pearson was one of those who filled the void. The 1940s and 1950s are often referred to as the “Golden Age” of Canadian diplomacy, an “era of good feeling” that is usually attributed to Pearson’s accomplishments as external affairs minister. Pearson took up the position at a time when Canada was punching above its weight in the world. Canada had helped win the war and, like the United States, emerged from the ashes relatively unscathed and as a richer, more powerful nation. Scholars argue, quite rightly, that Pearson set the diplomatic tone for the next two decades and that it was during his tenure in office that Canada aligned itself, both domestically and internationally, with the interests of the United States. The “Diefenbaker interlude”—the attempt to turn back towards Britain—did not, as Bothwell argues, “break the sequence of Canada’s international policy.” In foreign policy matters, Diefenbaker is often compared and measured against Pearson and is found wanting. The two men possessed different views on how to deal with Britain’s imperial decline—and, as it turned out, Pearson knew better.

Diefenbaker and Pearson have been portrayed as being “as different as chalk and cheese” ever since. The black and white partisan rhetoric uttered by Diefenbaker left little room for overlap between Tory and Liberal ideas of external affairs. However, as J.L. Granatstein has shown, there were similarities between the two arch political rivals: both men were born in late nineteenth century rural Ontario; both had families which shared similar “British” values and Protestant traditions; both went to university and served in the First World War; both went into politics. Being of the same generation, Diefenbaker and Pearson were both sympathetic to

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726 Bothwell, Alliance and Illusion, 117.
Britain in decades that followed the Second World War. Both, in their respective capacities, were faced with a similar quandary as to how the Commonwealth should evolve to suit changing global circumstances. Both were presented with the prospect of the British embracing a post-imperial “European” vocation and identity. Both had to reconcile their own nationalism with the fact that Canada was a North American nation stuck in the orbit of American superpower.

Like any good diplomat, Pearson’s answers to these questions were nuanced. In his position as secretary of state for external affairs in the late 1940s and early 1950s, he balanced his obligations to Britain, the United States, and the promise of a new multilateral world order by subscribing to an activist foreign policy centred on the United Nations and NATO.\footnote{John English, “‘A Fine Romance’: Canada and the United Nations, 1943-1957, in Canada and the Early Cold War, Greg Donaghy, ed. (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1998), pp. 73-89. John Holmes makes a similar point in The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957, Vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 192.} One of Pearson’s biographers has described him as a “Victorian Canadian” who, in his youth, “had no particular need to question the assumption that God was an Englishman and lived, part of the time at least, in distant London.”\footnote{Robert Bothwell, “Canada’s Moment: Lester Pearson, Canada, and the World,” in Pearson: The Unlikely Gladiator, Norman Hillmer, ed. (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 20.} When reflecting on the “evolution” of the Commonwealth at the end of his career, his sentimental language recalled these old loyalties: “we have moved in my own lifetime from an Empire without sunset, which God had made mighty and was implored to make mightier yet, to today’s mini-United Nations of equal sovereign states.”\footnote{John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis, eds., Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Vol. 2, 1948-1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 98.}

Despite his apparent attachment to the narrative of Britain’s torch of liberty, Pearson was a pragmatist whose political connections made him aware of the changing currents of world affairs. Any instinctive sympathies he harboured for a Britain in decline came second to a sound rational analysis of the utility of empire in the new, postwar world order. John English argues that after the Second World War he fully embraced the identity of a “western liberal” along with
a marked skepticism of Europe’s civilizing mission.\footnote{John English, \textit{The Wordly Years: The Life of Lester B. Pearson, Vol. II: 1949-1972} (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1993), 108.} But, as Mark Mazower has shown, a postwar liberal’s distaste for old school colonialism did not preclude him from pursuing empire by other means.\footnote{Mazower, \textit{No Enchanted Palace}, pp. 12-13; Chapter 2, pp. 66-103.} When confronted with the need to refashion the constitutional bases of the Commonwealth in order to retain the republic of India as a member during the Commonwealth Conference in London in the spring of 1949, Pearson honed in on its usefulness as a tool in the fight against the spread of communism in the third world and a means of exerting “example, pressure, and influence” on Britain’s former colonies.\footnote{In this, as Tony Judt points out, postwar iterations of empire were not so different than the more conventional ones of the nineteenth century. See Tony Judt, “Dreams of Empire,” \textit{New York Review of Books}, 51: 17 (4 November 2004).} Hence his involvement in the constitutional negotiations that allowed a republican India to remain within the Commonwealth. Pearson played a central role in the discussions that created an association based on “Commonwealth citizenship” marked by the rendering of the King—the “Head of the Commonwealth”— as the symbol of free association and the removal of the word “British” before that of “Commonwealth.”\footnote{Mike, Vol. 2, 104; “Commonwealth and King,” \textit{The Times}, Thursday 28 April 1949; Alan Harvey, “India Is First Republic within the Commonwealth,” \textit{The Globe and Mail}, Wednesday, 27 April 1949.}

According to \textit{The Times’} Ottawa correspondent, few saw this “transitional phase” in Commonwealth relations as an indication of weakness.\footnote{“Canada and the Commonwealth: Advocacy of Continued Indian Membership,” \textit{The Times}, Wednesday, 20 April 1949} Pearson’s appraisal of all this constitutional niggling was more pessimistic, however. To him it demonstrated the continuing flexibility and strength of the Commonwealth even as it foreshadowed the decline of British influence. In his memoirs, he noted that an institutional bond of union held together “only by self interest” was “bound to diminish.” The ties holding the old Commonwealth together had traditionally been based on “the common educational, legal, and even political backgrounds of many of the leaders,” not to mention their “shared experiences as students at Oxford and
Cambridge.” Yet “As new conditions arise and as new leaders take over… who have a different outlook in a different world and to whom parliamentary institutions and western traditions and values may have no appeal or even a little positive meaning,” Pearson believed that those bonds would continue to weaken. In a diary kept during his 1949 visit to London, he put it much more bluntly: British influence in the developing world “would probably decrease and time may confirm the statement that whereas the Portuguese left music and language in Ceylon, the Dutch Roman law and domestic cleanliness, the British only left cricket.”

While Pearson still believed that there were sound and practical reasons why the Commonwealth should stay together, he chose instead to focus the bulk of his attentions on NATO. The Atlantic Alliance was one that he and his colleagues hoped would “not be exclusively military in character” but also join the North Atlantic countries together in order to bolster “economic and even spiritual defences against Communist attack.” His early support for what would soon become the European Economic Community further suggests the extent to which he thought the new world order would be one of regional and multilateral integration based on military alliances, trade, and a common liberal democratic world view.

The foreign policy of Pearson and Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent, was designed to reflect changing circumstances abroad as well as at home. The currents of thought underlying the Liberal strategy had been outlined two years earlier when Louis St. Laurent, then secretary of state for external affairs, inaugurated the Gray Lecture series at the University of Toronto on 13 January 1947 with a speech outlining “The Foundations of Canadian Policy in World Affairs.”

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736 Mike, Vol. II, 106.
737 Ibid., 113.
739 For more on Pearson’s support for European integration, see John English, Wordly Years, 114.
740 The text of the address was written by Gerry Riddell from the Department of External Affairs. See Louis St. Laurent, The Foundations of Canadian Policy in World Affairs: Duncan & John Gray Memorial Lecture (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
In what has been referred to as “the first defining doctrine in postwar Canadian foreign policy,” he announced the party’s new four-pronged strategy: to acknowledge Canada’s responsibility as “middle power” and pursue an activist foreign policy; answer the challenges posed by the Soviet menace by promoting freedom and liberty abroad; to respect and promote international law; and finally, to better reflect the ethnic and religious pluralism at home. Although the first three points were something on which all parties could agree, it was the Liberals’ insistence on the relationship between external relations and national unity which had the potential of opening up a festering wound in the Canadian psyche.

St. Laurent’s speech complemented the Canadian Citizenship Act, a transformative piece of legislation passed in the previous year, on 27 June 1946, which made qualified residents “citizens of Canada” as opposed to British subjects. The historical revisionism of the Gray Lecture complimented this redefinition of citizenship. Canada had fought in two world wars, St. Laurent proclaimed, not merely to show its loyalty to Britain but also as a response to “a threat to the liberty of western Europe, where our political ideas were nurtured… and to our own way of life.” Canadians’ contributions to the world during the First and Second World Wars deserved recognition on their own terms. St. Laurent made it plain to the public that Britain was no longer...
the focal point of Canadian foreign policy. And to be sure, as St. Laurent’s colleague, Paul Martin, observed at the time: the idea of a separate Canadian citizenship was a hard sell not only in Parliament but among the Liberal Cabinet and civil service.\(^{745}\) It is for this reason that the citizenship act would, in Martin’s words, “fulfill Laurier’s vision of a separate Canadian nation” while at the same time ensuring that Canadians would “still be British subjects.”\(^ {746}\) Putting the citizenship act into law, he argued, would “provide an underlying community of status for all our people in this country that will help to bind them together as Canadians.”\(^ {747}\) Paul Martin’s reference to the fulfillment of “Laurier’s vision” implied that the Citizenship Bill embodied a true Liberal idea of autonomous Canadian citizenship and a foreign policy independent of the British Empire. That this “Liberal tradition” of foreign policy would turn the screws on Britain—“mother country” and ally—as it attempted to reclaim its global power status in the postwar world provoked a scathing response of those supporters of the “Conservative tradition” who viewed themselves as Britons.

Tensions that had been building since the passage of the Citizenship Act in 1946 came to a head during the drama of Suez—a crisis that not only demonstrated Britain’s diminished influence on issues of war and peace but also its inability to act independently of the United States.\(^ {748}\) At least these were the conclusions formed by St. Laurent and Pearson, his external affairs minister, after Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt late in October, 1956.\(^ {749}\) The


\(^{746}\) Ibid., 67.

\(^{747}\) HC Debates, 22 October 1945, 1335.

\(^{748}\) For contemporary commentary on the Suez Crisis and what many viewed as the symbolic end of the British Empire, see “Small War in Shadow of a Big-Stick Threat—The Franco-British Attack on Suez,” Time, 19 November 1956. David Marquand examines the impact of the Laborite rally of protest over Suez which drew upwards of 10,000 people to London’s Trafalgar Square on 4 November 1956 in Britain Since 1918, 161. For English Canadian opinion on the protests, see “Demonstrators in Clash,” The Times, Monday 5 November 1956; “Police Disperse Anti-Eden Mob,” The Globe and Mail, Monday 5 November 1956, 1.

\(^{749}\) Pearson’s Memoirs provide a detailed example both his and St. Laurent’s thoughts and actions regarding the escalating crisis between Britain, France, Israel and Egypt in the Middle East and within the NATO alliance itself.
Suez area had been viewed by the British as “a strategic necessity” since the mid-nineteenth century, first as a “highway” pivotal to the defence of the empire and, later, as the central means by which oil could be transported to Europe from the Middle East. When the canal was nationalized by the Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser—a thorn in the side of Europe and the United States since the Egyptian republic was established in 1952—London and Paris opted to “go it alone” and “leave Washington behind” in their attempt to re-assert their power in the Middle East. Dwight Eisenhower publicly chastised the rashness of the British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, in encouraging the attack on Egypt. “Through the actions of the United Nations,” Eisenhower declared, “the opinion of the world would be brought to bear in our quest for a just end to this tormenting problem.” The worst case scenario was a prolonged war that would encourage the Soviet Union to exploit an opportunity to introduce its own forces into the Middle East. And at the very least, it tested the contemporary structure of international relations.

In Canada, the Suez Crisis forced Louis St Laurent into the difficult position of having to choose whether to side with the British in their assault on Egypt—a fully sovereign country—or with the United States for having condemned it. He aired his frustrations with Eden in a memo that outlined the consequences of British actions and indicated that he shared American objections to British conduct, but as a Canadian he went a step beyond. The Anglo-French and Israeli resort to force, St. Laurent argued, had the potential of creating a permanent schism within the Commonwealth as non-aligned nations like India would inevitably oppose Britain’s neo-

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colonial adventure.\textsuperscript{753} Eden’s actions had also inflicted damage to the NATO free-world alliance, creating undue tensions between Britain and the United States and challenging the international law outlined in the United Nations Charter.\textsuperscript{754}

In Parliament, St. Laurent inadvertently went public with his distaste for Britain’s global pretensions. Suez, he said, had shown the world that “the era when the supermen of Europe could govern the whole world has and is coming to a pretty close end.”\textsuperscript{755} This ill-advised foreign expedition in the Middle East would, St. Laurent feared, bring long-term discredit and catastrophic loss of influence for Britain and France.\textsuperscript{756} As it had during the Second World War, Canada would again turn to the United States for global leadership.\textsuperscript{757} Pearson’s resolution requesting the U.N. secretary general to develop a plan to introduce a peace force into the Middle East was made at the behest of the Americans, after all.\textsuperscript{758} The difficulty the Liberal government would have in justifying their apparently anti-British and pro-American U.N. resolution to the Canadian public was not lost on them. “It is bad to be a chore boy for the United States,” Pearson said in Parliament, in defence of his actions, “but it is equally bad to be a colonial chore boy, running around shouting ‘Ready, aye, ready!’” Perhaps for the first time, a speech made by a Canadian in the House of Commons made headlines in the U.S. \textit{Time} came out a week later with

\textsuperscript{753} For St. Laurent’s angry exchanges with Anthony Eden, see Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER): 110 and 113; See “Mr. Nehru’s Suez Attitude,” \textit{The Times}, Saturday 10 November 1956; “Karachi View on Suez Issues,” \textit{The Times}, 12 November 1956.
\textsuperscript{754} See Pearson, Memoirs, pp. 238–9; Bothwell, Alliance and Illusion, 126.
\textsuperscript{755} \textit{HC Debates}, November 26 1956, 20.
\textsuperscript{756} Tony Judt points out that “Iraq, it is now being whispered abroad, is America’s ‘Suez.’” See “Dreams of Empire,” \textit{New York Review of Books}, 51:17 (4 November 2004).
an article entitled, “Canada: Declaration of Independence.” “Shortly after he [Pearson] spoke,” 
*Time* reported, “the house voted 171 to 36 against a Tory no-confidence motion.”

Pearson’s motion in the General Assembly to organize a United Nations force “to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities” in the Middle East might have been a face-saving approach which allowed Britain to quickly pull out of a messy situation, but Progressive Conservatives and the English-language press did not see it that way. Although the Liberals’ large majority had easily allowed them to survive the no-confidence vote, questions about their loyalty to Britain and historically pro-American foreign policies at once became an accepted subject of partisan discourse. Historic narratives of autonomy and empire were invoked by warring Grits and Tories in Parliament. The Liberals’ actions during Suez were portrayed as an act of betrayal, a proverbial knife in the back of an already struggling Britain. In the eyes of the opposition and the myriad British apologists who vented their frustrations in local newspapers, the Liberals’ foreign policy had the damaging effect of “bracketing Britain and France with Russia as [imperial] aggressors.” One Conservative MP, Donald Fleming, demanded that St. Laurent “repent in sackcloth and ashes” the infamous “supermen of Europe” statement. “It is high time,” argued his colleague, Howard Green, “that Canada had leadership more in line with the forthrightness and the courage of the Canadian people. It is high time Canada had a government which will not knife Canada’s best friends in the back.” Alf Brooks, another Tory, stated that “the Commonwealth was on the brink of disaster and the Canadian Government deserved much of the blame. It had followed the appeasing policies of the United States.”

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760 Jose Igartua provides an extensive overview of reactions in the English-Language press to the crisis in the Middle East. See *The Other Quiet Revolution*, pp. 124-129.
The Tories exploited the opportunity for anti-American rhetoric to the maximum because their identities as Canadians were pegged on the fate of Great Britain and they knew that many English Canadians felt the same way. A Gallup poll taken shortly after the crisis had confirmed that only 43 per cent of Canadians were in favour of Anglo-French Action, 40 per cent disapproved, and 17 per cent had no opinion.\textsuperscript{764} As Denis Smith has shown, the Conservative caucus was similarly torn between its loyalty to Britain and its support of the United Nations. The tension between toeing an American line via the United Nations and advocating a strong Commonwealth plagued Diefenbaker, who was, at the time, the opposition’s foreign affairs critic and would soon be the leader of his party.\textsuperscript{765} Unlike Donald Fleming, whose imperialist ranting would cost him the support of French Canadian colleagues at the leadership convention later in December, Diefenbaker’s speech during the special debate on foreign policy was diplomatic.\textsuperscript{766} He neither condemned nor praised Pearson’s proposal for a UN force in the Middle East. But he objected to what he viewed as St. Laurent’s kowtowing to President Nasser, his careless rebuke of France and Britain, and insinuated vaguely that the Liberals could have found another way to mitigate the damage to Anglo-American relations. Diefenbaker concluded by suggesting that a “Quebec conference” (recalling those between Churchill and Roosevelt in 1943-4) be organized to bring together the leaders of the United States, Britain, and France “without malice, without vituperative statements, and without words of grandiloquent content, and in that city lay the foundations for once more re-establishing in the free world a unity which, unless it is achieved and achieved immediately, may result in irreparable harm.”\textsuperscript{767}

\textsuperscript{764} On the Gallup poll, James Eayrs, “Canadian Policy and Opinion During the Suez Crisis,” \textit{International Journal} 12, No. 2 (Spring 1957), 103. José Igartua notes that the poll was taken in Toronto; see Igartua, \textit{The Other Quiet Revolution}, 247.

\textsuperscript{765} Denis Smith, \textit{Rogue Tory} (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1995), 207.

\textsuperscript{766} Donald Fleming notes the negative impact of his speech in \textit{So Very Near}, Vol. I, 327. See also \textit{The Winnipeg Tribune}, 3 December 1956; \textit{Winnipeg Free Press}, 4 December 1956.

\textsuperscript{767} \textit{HC Debates}, 29 November 1956, pp. 139-44.
The Quebec conference notion might have been a rhetorical flourish, but Diefenbaker was crystal clear about the connection the electorate should draw between Pearson and St. Laurent’s foreign policy and the more general impression of Liberal arrogance he was trying to cultivate. The results of a poll taken by *Saturday Night* and published in its issue for 17 August 1957 suggest that foreign policy had little effect on the outcome of the election that summer. Yet the effectiveness of Diefenbaker’s impression of St Laurent’s “supermen of Europe” speech on the campaign trail was widely noted at the time. Jack Pickersgill, St. Laurent’s minister of Citizenship and Immigration, recalled that “the failure to support Britain over Suez was perhaps the deepest emotional issue and may well have lost [the Liberals] more seats than any other single cause.” Like Sir John A. Macdonald who lambasted Wilfrid Laurier for his continentalist sympathies, Diefenbaker took to the campaign trail insisting that St. Laurent pursued an anti-British, pro-American agenda that was intrinsic to Liberal policy and detrimental to Canadian sovereignty.

The traction of the “Yankee go home” rhetoric in the postwar period serves as a powerful indication that the representation of Canada as a British nation still held a deep appeal for English-speaking Canadians. The Liberals’ rejection of Britain became a mainstay of Diefenbaker’s 1957 and 1958 national campaigns; it was the means by which he could link the Liberals’ decision to open the floodgates of American investment, culture, and influence during the Second World War—and to leave it open well after it was over—with a pro-American and anti-British foreign policy. While delivering the first speech of his campaign at Toronto’s

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769 Diefenbaker was reported to have received a remarkable response wherever he made the statement. See the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, 2 May 1957; J.H. Aitkinson, “Canadian Foreign Policy in the House and on the Hustings,” 287.
Massey Hall, in the same breath that Diefenbaker asked his audience “how long, with the growing dominance of foreign-owned enterprises, can Canada continue a separate existence?” he promised them that his government would “retain a close relationship with the Commonwealth.”

“Farm markets are being lost,” he told listeners in Montreal, and “to the greatest extent the British market, traditionally Canada’s surest and best, is being sacrificed, and the uncertain U.S. market is being substituted therefore.” “Last year,” he despaired, “73% of Canada’s imports came from the United States, while 60% of the exports went to the United States. In 1956, Canada achieved a frightening and perilous adverse balance of trade with the United States of $1,290,000,000, the greatest in Canada’s History.”

“So strong have the United States economic interests among us become and so great is the power of diffusion of all aspects of their way of life,” he warned, “that there is a great peril of slow annihilation of Canadian individuality which had hardly begun to become personified.” In order to “avoid becoming a “pale carbon copy of the United States,” Diefenbaker argued, with his New National Policy and a renewed commitment to the Commonwealth, “we would be doing everything in our power to strengthen east-west bonds.” A National Policy, like that of Sir John A. Macdonald’s, would ensure that Canadians—and not Americans—would “develop our natural resources for maximum benefit and correct the present unfavourable trade balances.”

Diefenbaker argued, had always envisioned “the development of Canada within the framework of the Commonwealth. He saw Canada, for all practical purposes, as an independent, self-
governing nation, owing allegiance to the Crown in common with other self-governing

dominions.”

In his speeches in the House and on the hustings, Diefenbaker left little room for the
duality of message and manner that is required of a seasoned diplomat. As Basil Robinson, his
External Affairs liaison officer, observed at the time, “Diefenbaker had little experience or talent
for reconciling opposing viewpoints.” Yet his policies, rhetoric, and actions with regards to
external policy were still riddled with contradictions. Among the diplomats reporting on
Diefenbaker’s electoral victories to their superiors in the United States and Britain, the
consequences of this changing of the guard was the subject of much deliberation. The American
Ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant, described the potential impact of Diefenbaker’s
polarizing discourse to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: “There is in this rapidly
developing nation a growing consciousness of national destiny and nationalism. The
Conservative victories in the June 10 1957 and March 31 1958 elections inevitably will lead to a
re-examination of major Canadian Government policies with significant implications for the
entire spectrum of United States-Canadian relations.” The strongly nationalistic attitude of the
Conservatives,” Merchant maintained, “may complicate the maintenance of relatively easy
relations with the United States.”

A biting memo from the pen of J.J.S. Garner, the United
Kingdom High Commissioner in Canada, reported a similar yet undefined shift in Canada’s
external policy: “The attitude of Canada towards the United States is generally ambivalent and
the new Government shows some signs of schizophrenia in their relations with their powerful
neighbours to the south.” “They realize their military as well as economic dependence on the

776 Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 318.
777 “Statement by The Honorable Livingston T. Merchant, United States Ambassador to Canada, Before the Senate
Foreign Relations Committee on United States Relations with Canada,” 16 May 1958: JGDP MG/01/XII/A/295.
United States in every sphere,” Garner observed, “and they would not wish to upset the friendly
relations which prevail between the two countries.”

It is not surprising that elite diplomats would see “signs of schizophrenia” in
Diefenbaker’s proselytizing tones and the actions of his inexperienced government. The general
elections of 1957 and 1958 had thrown into high relief tensions that had been brewing for over a
decade about Anglo-American-Canadian relations. When Diefenbaker eventually sat down to
perform the duties of Secretary of State for External Affairs, the continuity between his foreign
policy and that of his Liberal predecessors with regards to the ongoing problems posed by the
Cold War, North American defence, and a Britain in decline became apparent. Like St. Laurent and Pearson, he believed in an active Canadian foreign policy and acknowledged the
importance of NATO and the United Nations as a bulwark against Soviet aggression. He
thought enough of the integration of U.S.-Canadian bi-national defence that soon after the 1957
election he hastily accepted proposals for a North American Aerospace Defence Command
(NORAD). He agreed along with Paul Martin, Sr. that ideas of citizenship and nationality had
to change in Canada in order to reflect religious and ethnic diversity both at home and abroad
and stood out among his fellow Tories as an active supporter of the Citizenship Bill.

Diefenbaker differed with his Liberal counterparts, however, with regard to the
importance of the Commonwealth to Canada’s global ambitions and its future as a mechanism
for promoting world stability and peace. “In a world passing through two great human
experiences—the thrust of technology and the thrust of political and social change,” Diefenbaker

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778 UK High Commissioner in Canada, J.J.S. Garner to the Right Hon. Harold Macmillan, Commonwealth Relations
Official Print, 17 October 1957: K EW CRO CON 298/1/1.
779 Sidney Smith took over as Secretary of State for External Affairs in November, 1957.
780 Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 20-21; Smith, Rogue Tory, pp. 263-64, 292-296; “Agreement between the
Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America concerning the Organization and
Operation of the North American Air Defence Command (NORAD), Signed at Washington, May 12 1958”: JGDP,
XII/20/A/556.
declared to the United Nations General Assembly in 1960, “new perspectives have been given for a better life.” In the context of Canada’s external affairs, Diefenbaker’s answer to this so-called “challenge of modernity” would not solely be found in North Atlantic power bloc, a monolithic union of the Americas, or a United Nations curtailed by great power vetoes. He found “new perspectives” on how to build a better world in what was, at the time, a transatlantic movement to adapt the old British Commonwealth to new and challenging postwar conditions. For Diefenbaker, turning towards the Commonwealth was not, as one historian has put it—“a means of counteracting disturbing modernizing trends like American imperialism.” Nor was it, on a personal level, the best means by which a “rogue Tory” could find a way to fit in among the Anglophiles of Toronto’s Conservative elite. In Diefenbaker’s mind, the Commonwealth was at the cutting edge of liberal internationalism and epitomized the modernization and progress of the postwar period. Within its ranks, the Commonwealth could hold all ethnic groups. It was the means by which the acts of middle powers like Canada and developing powers like India could come to have world-historical meaning.

In this Diefenbaker was drawing on various currents of thought about how the old British Empire might adapt itself to current conditions. As early as 1944, the British Ambassador to the United States, Lord Halifax, travelled to Toronto to impress upon Canadians the importance of discovering a way for the Commonwealth to remain “united, vital, and coherent” after the War. Sentiments like these were nothing new—some members of the British elite had been demanding an acceptable model of imperial federation since the turn of the century. But Halifax

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783 Massolin, Canadian Intellectuals, The Tory Tradition and the Challenge of Modernity, 245.
784 Igartua, The Other Quiet Revolution, 130. Igartua cites Denis Smith as the source of this insight into Diefenbaker’s self-serving love of mother Britain. See Denis Smith, Rogue Tory, 191.
786 Lord Halifax, “Extracts from Speech…,” 25 January 1944, in Published Documents, Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs, pp. 575-79.
had shown that the question of imperial citizenship and unity was far from dead in postwar Britain and throughout the Commonwealth.\(^787\)

Winston Churchill, ever the Victorian imperialist, was likewise concerned with finding new ways for Britain to survive as a global power after the war. A pamphlet published by his Conservative party made clear that if the countries of the Empire and Commonwealth failed to find a way to work together “each of us will singly face increasing poverty and home and growing security abroad.”\(^788\) Churchill believed that one solution to the problem of Commonwealth security would be to establish an alliance with the United States. In the famous “iron curtain” speech he delivered in Missouri on 5 March 1946, Churchill referred to the recently established U.S.-Canada Permanent Joint Board on Defence as having the potential to bring the British Empire and the United States together within a larger Anglosphere. “This principle,” he recommended, “should be extended to all the British Commonwealths [sic] with full reciprocity. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and various British possessions from around the world would thus be welded into a kind of outer perimeter of defence against the Soviet threat.”\(^789\) In his memoirs, Diefenbaker argued that as early as 1941 he had written the three leading members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives suggesting much the same thing. “Nothing would establish the unity of the English-speaking world more” he argued, than the “gathering of democratically elected representatives” in North America and Britain. He envisioned Canada as a lynchpin between US and British interests and believed that

\(^{787}\) Max Beloff views the “end of empire” in Britain as due to the marginalization of Tory imperialists like Halifax and a more general lack of political will on the part of politicians in Britain and the Dominions. See, *Imperial Sunset: Britain’s Liberal Empire, 1897-1921*, Vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Knopf, 1970).


an Anglosphere-type arrangement working concurrently with the nations of the new
Commonwealth would best “ensure the survival of freedom.” 790

At the same time, however, there were Commonwealth theorists whose vision of the
future did not involve a world run by great powers. Although it is not apparent that Diefenbaker
had read any of their work, the migration of these ideas to Canada would make an indelible
impact on talk of the Commonwealth. Proponents of the Commonwealth in South Africa,
Australia, the United Kingdom, and India were divided on its utility in global affairs and how it
should function. On the one hand, there was Jan Christian Smuts, the South African leader who
saw in the old Victorian Empire the structure of a new Commonwealth of interdependent and
self-governing Dominions. 791 At the time, Smuts was celebrated as a “liberal internationalist”
who believed in the idea of a “holistic world order.” 792

That Smuts’ world was divided along racial lines was not lost on the new developing
nations and their supporters who sought to break free of European governance. A number of
scholars from all corners of the old empire believed, along with the British Labour MP, Patrick
Gordon Walker, that “there could be no Commonwealth but for the negation, withdrawal, and
transformation of British imperialism.” According to Walker, “British imperial rule” could
“fulfill itself only by annulling itself.” If it did not, he believed that “the the normal historical
process of imperial disintegration would have taken place: instead of becoming a
Commonwealth, the Empire would have extinguished itself in a trail of Americas, followed by a
trail of Burmas.” 793

Diefenbaker became Prime Minister against this background of geopolitical ferment. The
Commonwealth Conference held in mid-summer July, 1957 was his first overseas rendezvous as

791 “Jan Christian Smuts, South Africa’s Elder Statesman,” LIFE, 8 November 1943.
leader of Canada. Prior to his arrival in London, a charming anecdote was sent to The Times from Diefenbaker’s public relations team. The note told of how “how he received the Queen’s telegram in which she thanked him for the loyalty of the new Administration and she said that she hoped to see him next week at the same time as he received from President Eisenhower a letter of congratulations and warm assurances of abiding friendship between the United States and Canada.” Diefenbaker reported that “the almost simultaneous arrival of these messages was more than sheer coincidence and he considered it dramatic evidence of Canada’s unique position in the Commonwealth under the unity of the Crown and her close relationships with the United States.”

The note served the double purpose of generating Diefenbaker buzz in the British press and underlining, in order, what he believed to be the keys to Canada’s external affairs: encouraging closer Commonwealth relations, loyalty to the Monarchy as a symbol of the enduring British connection, and maintaining close and friendly ties to the United States.

The conference was reportedly organized by the new Conservative government of Harold Macmillan in order to reaffirm Commonwealth harmony in the wake of the Suez Crisis.

While at the table, Diefenbaker strayed little from the substance of the policies set by the former Liberal government—he spoke of battling Soviet aggression via NATO, supporting the UN peace force in Egypt, and the possibility of establishing “open skies” in the Arctic in the hopes of encouraging disarmament. Imprudent clues he dropped about the threat of American investment to Canadian sovereignty and the need for Commonwealth trade, however, soon revealed the shades of gray that would differentiate the new Canadian government from the old.

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795 Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 10.
796 Smith, Rogue Tory, 251.
797 His comments were deemed imprudent, at least, in the eyes of British diplomat, J.J.S. Garner, who recalled these early faux pas in a memo written in January 1959 to Earl of Home, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations. J.J.S. Garner, “Canada/U.S. Relations”: KEW FO 371/138901.
During the Dominion Day Dinner, Diefenbaker threw some light on how his administration might differ from that of St. Laurent’s. Without finding out from his advisors what could be gained by it, he declared that Canada would bolster Commonwealth trade. A Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference would be organized, Diefenbaker announced, for the purpose of exploring “the field of trade and capital investment within the Commonwealth.”

To be sure, Canada’s trade with Great Britain was still significant; in 1957 it exported $727 million worth of goods and imported over $500 million. But these millions were less impressive when compared to the billions of dollars worth of exports and imports going to and coming from the United States. Throughout the 1950s, as Bothwell has shown, the St. Laurent government attempted and failed to promote trade with Great Britain. Although it had stood aside from the Rome Treaty which set up the six-member European Economic Community in early 1958, there would soon be talk of Britain joining the powerful economic and political bloc on the continent—a move many predicted would hinder Commonwealth trade.

Unencumbered by numbers, Diefenbaker pressed ahead, believing that “expanding Commonwealth trade” would be a means of meeting “not only the military but also the economic offensive of the USSR.” Buoyed by the attention he received at the meeting in London, influenced by notes of support from the likes of his Minister of Justice, E. Davie Fulton, and no doubt excited at the prospect of announcing to the public that headway had been made in

798 In this he followed up on an election promise made during the 1957 campaign. See “Text of Address Delivered by John G. Diefenbaker, Q.C., M.P. At Leaders’ Banquet Montreal, QUE. March 12, 1957”: JGDP Speeches Series Election 1957.
800 Bothwell, Alliance and Illusion, 138.
801 H.E. English, “The Economic Consequences of June 10,” Canadian Forum, August 1957. For more on Britain and the early stages of negotiations to join the EEC, see Marquand, Britain Since 1918, 175.
802 “Address for Delivery to Pilgrim’s Society, New York, by the Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker, Prime Minister of Canada, 26 October 1958”: JGDP MG 01/XII/A/443.5. Diefenbaker had been warned by some ministers at home, Donald Fleming among them, not to “expect too much on the trade side.” See Tim Rooth, “Britain, Europe, and Diefenbaker’s Trade Diversion Proposals, 1957-58,” in Phillip Buckner, Canada and the End of Empire (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), pp. 117-118.
realigning Canadian trade and its external affairs, Diefenbaker spoke of his plan to divert 15 per cent of Canadian trade from the United States to the United Kingdom. Criticisms of his unstudied plan came swiftly. The scheme flew in the face of agreements that Canada had made with the US under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (1947). That he had failed to discuss his plans while at the conference table in London and had burdened the British government with talk of preferential Commonwealth trade in the early stages of negotiations with Europe irritated Macmillan. The British government swiftly responded by putting forward a plan for a free-trade agreement which they knew Canada could not accept. Diefenbaker had committed his first major diplomatic faux pas.

Cables from Ottawa to London from the pen of J.J.S. Garner attributed Diefenbaker’s gaffe to his inexperience, ineptitude, and misplaced faith in the Commonwealth. “Unlike the Liberals,” Garner observed, “they have a special sympathy for Britain, they regard the Commonwealth as a bulwark of their own freedom as well as a valued means of association with other countries throughout the world and they will certainly want to make their contribution towards preserving these links, to which they attach great importance.” Basil Robinson noted in his memoirs that Macmillan was baffled by the Canadian prime minister’s naiveté. In the early stages of their relationship, he identified Diefenbaker as “a fine man,” who, though “sincere and determined,” was “the victim of his election oratory”; a man who had formed a “rather misleading” idea of “what can and cannot be done with the Commonwealth today.” Macmillan’s official biographer, Alistair Horne, has made it clear that the British leader looked

806 Quoted in Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 31.
on the Commonwealth as “that optimistic legacy of the imperial past.” Britain’s role in the world had changed, its relative power had diminished, and Macmillan believed that economic integration with Europe and cultivation of a strong Anglo-American bond was the best way to meet these changing postwar circumstances.\textsuperscript{807} Like Pearson, who kept his misgivings about the Commonwealth relatively private, behind closed doors Macmillan was of the opinion that the ties that bound the Commonwealth together would inevitably weaken and that, at best, it would remain means of exerting influence through culture and the exchange of ideas.\textsuperscript{808}

Leaders like Macmillan and Pearson were unwilling to publicize their dire assessments of the Commonwealth in the late 1950s, because it was not politically expedient for them to do so. As we have seen, interest in finding a way to renew the Commonwealth to fit the times peaked in the 1950s in Britain and throughout the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{809} Stalwarts still held out hope that the British Empire could survive into the postwar era. Imperialists of a Victorian frame of mind were committed to retaining the ethnic definition of the British identity and the traditional signs, symbols, and Protestantism so integral to it. Proponents of liberal internationalism were keen to see the Commonwealth evolve into a functional, liberal internationalist institution.

Diefenbaker’s conception of the Commonwealth contained elements of both these variants of imperialism. There is a growing body of literature that emphasizes the extent to which the criteria of nationality, race, and religion were still central to the British definition of Canada in the postwar period.\textsuperscript{810} To be sure, by the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s, fewer and fewer English Canadians subscribed to the variety of imperialism that viewed Canada as a British

\textsuperscript{808} Ibid., pp. 187-188.
\textsuperscript{809} Bothwell, \textit{Alliance and Illusion}, 147.
\textsuperscript{810} Franca Iacovetta discusses the implications of Britishness and ideas of Canadian citizenship for newcomers in \textit{Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada} (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006). On the implications to Canada and Canadians of British decolonization, the end of empire, and conceptions of Britishness see Buckner, \textit{Canada and the End of Empire}, esp. pp. 1-24; José Igartua examines representations of national identity in anglophone Canada in the immediate postwar decades in \textit{The Other Quiet Revolution}; on the reaction of “tory” intellectuals to the decline of Victorian values—agrarian, religious, ethnic—in postwar Canada, see Philip Massolin, \textit{Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity}, 1939-70.
nation. Still, old school imperialism played an important role in shaping political discourse, cutting across boundaries of class, race and gender, providing a vocabulary for people who were uncomfortable with the growing centrality of consumerism in Canadian life, American influence, and the Soviet threat. The historian Matthew Dawson, for instance, has explored how English Canadians invoked talk of British traditions as a means of opposing the liberalization of shopping regulations in Vancouver and Victoria in the 1940s and 50s. Another historian, Katie Pickles, has shown that during the Cold War, the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) operated between and across constructed public and private spheres to protect “family values” against the communist enemy and advocate closer ties to Britain.

Charlotte Whitton was prolific in her comments on the problems facing postwar Canada and a firm believer in Britishness as a cure-all for its ailments. She was an active member of the IODE and a well-known contributor to the conservative women’s movement that nominated the Dominion for a greater role within the empire at war’s end. Whitton was also a friend and political ally of John Diefenbaker. Written sometime during the Second World War, Whitton’s essay, entitled “Our Heritage of Freedom,” was recycled on occasion by the IODE as a reminder of the centrality of Britain to national political life. “This way of life of ours,” Whitton said, “was founded on freedom and that freedom has been won to us, not by long wars of conquest or even of defence, but by the persistent purpose and pursuit of freedom, by the race,


For more on the IODE and the importance of empire to postwar Canada, see “Canada’s Future Possibilities in Postwar Reconstruction,” *Echoes* 161 (Christmas 1940); “Reconstruction: Resolutions of National Empire Study Committee,” *Echoes* 166 (spring 1942); 24, 167; (summer 1942): 9, 45. For more on Whitton’s relationship with Diefenbaker, see Whitton’s letter to Diefenbaker, 9 June 1949: LAC MG 30/E256/Vol. 87.
through its little people, no less than through the great figures.” Thinking of the violence wrought by the war, Whitton reminded her sisters that, although the fight for freedom “in our day and generation” was happening in lands “with older richer, more bitterly bought heritages of freedom than ours in Canada,” it had come to “us by right of birth and descent from two of the greatest of the free peoples of Europe.” In the midst of the Cold War and a wave of immigration from places other than Great Britain, Whitton’s words reminded Canadians that the fight was not over: “The fundamentals of our freedom are safe only as they are clearly perceived, valiantly valued and vigorously defended in the daily life of all citizens of the free Commonwealth. And that will not be easy in Canada. We are not a homogeneous people.” 

Familial connections, allegiance to the Queen, the Union Jack, Red Ensign, and a preference for the nation’s nominal status as a “Dominion,” were crucial to Tories for whom “being of the breed” was essential to their conception of citizenship. The sheer volume of British immigration in the postwar period made way for a British-boom. Between 1956 and 1960, over 200,000 immigrants from Britain arrived on Canada’s shores. The arriving Brits would have brought their cultural artifacts with them, encouraging the home-grown Anglophilia already thriving in English Canada. Tory MPs like E. Davie Fulton and Gordon Churchill and their cohort were engaged in what they viewed as a meaningful and relevant battle to bolster Canada’s British identity against the onslaught of communists, wayward immigrants, and a Liberal party willing to placate outsiders in return for votes. 

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817 José Igartua explores the importance of the British ethnic identity to certain segments of Anglo Canadians at length in The Other Quiet Revolution, esp. Ch. 1: “Being of the Breed” and “The Boundaries of Citizenship,” and “Values, Memories, Symbols, Myths and Traditions,” pp. 16-88.
819 For example, Davie Fulton kept a file on the “Commonwealth” in his personal papers in which he collected letters pertaining to the need to encourage the immigration of “people of Anglo-Saxon origin” in addition to speeches he and others delivered on “The Changing Commonwealth” and notes on Commonwealth politics in Australia and South Africa: LAC MG 32/B11/Vol. 6.
letter written by Mr. Maddux of Toronto in August 1954, for example, Fulton states that “it was precisely because people of Anglo-Saxon origins are more readily assimilable [sic], and therefore ready to become citizens without the necessity of waiting 5 years [that he suggested that the Citizenship Bill be amended to make it easier for Britons to immigrate to Canada] in the House of Commons.” “I do also think,” he continued, “that it would be an appropriate gesture, particularly in times of international stress such as these…to remind ourselves that there does exist an international brotherhood and a concept of common citizenship which we all enjoy as subjects of the Queen and members or citizens of the British Empire.”

Derived from what Igartua has identified as “a set of ethnic, political and symbolic markers considered to be obtained by birth and education into the British culture,” Fulton’s sense of Britishness was central to his identity as a Conservative and a Canadian citizen.

There is a dimension to the Victorian variant of imperialism that Igartua has ignored, however, and that is religion. To those who viewed Canada as existing within a larger imperial framework, empire was more than just an “international brotherhood” of Britons with “a common citizenship”; it was a family of nations that shared the same God. As Linda Colley and others have shown, Protestantism was a key component in the creation of sense of Britishness from the eighteenth century until well into the twentieth. The activities of Diefenbaker’s friend and political ally, the Conservative MP, Gordon Churchill, exemplify the extent to which Protestantism provided English Canadian men and women a sense of identity, a

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821 Igartua, The Other Quiet Revolution, 4.
self worth, and a place in history. Churchill collected sermons and pamphlets produced by a
variety of Protestant Churches on the importance of British symbols and traditions. One such is a
sermon which, as we have seen in Chapter 2, was written by the Rev. Gordon C. Smyth on
“National Symbols: Anthem and Flag.”824 Churchill carefully preserved an essay written by Tory
M.P. R. Hardy Small elaborates on the connection between Christianity, empire, national
symbols, and the Britishness of English Canada. According to Small, the Union Jack was “never
the banner of a single country.” It stood instead for “United Nations” and so “with the expansion
of the British Empire went the Union Jack, carrying in its wake civilization and Christianity.”
“Our Canadian way of life, rooted and grounded in the British Parliamentary institutions,” Small
maintained, “can be symbolized in no better way than by a flag what is rich in spiritual content,
and features prominently that which only flags in the British Commonwealth possess, “The
Christian Concept.” He was referring to the crosses of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick.825

Diefenbaker’s instinctive sympathies for Britain were derived from a traditional variant
of imperialism that was built on a common commitment to Protestantism and a firm belief that
the British Empire had bequeathed upon its far-flung colonies—and the people whom white
settlers displaced to live in them—a heritage of freedom and a superior form of civilization.826
Like Winston Churchill and most other imperialists of a Victorian bent, he firmly believed that
imperialism and progressivism were part and parcel of Great Britain’s proud history.827 Having
been brought up in the hinterlands of Canada, so far from the imperial metropolis, symbols,

824 For example, see in Gordon Churchill Fonds: Rev. Gordon C. Smyth, “National Symbols: Anthem and Flag,” 24;
825 R. Hardy Small, M.P., “Frank Fragments from Parliament: Flag Controversy,” (n.d.). Also in Churchill’s fonds,
sermons delivered by United Church ministers on national symbols, anthem and flag; pamphlets from the
Covenant’s Men’s Club about national symbols; “Sunday Morning Devotions, Flags All Flying”: LAC MG
32/B9/Vol. 91.
826 The raison d’être of the Round Table Movement that reached its peak of influence on Canadian politics in the
early twentieth century. See Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-
1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971). For more on the Round Table Movement in an international
context, see Denis Judd, Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present (New York: Harper
traditions, institutions, and imperial mythology were, for him, a means of connecting to the wider world. His speeches were loaded with references to the monarchy, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationalism, and war that were so central to the British imperial identity.

Yet it is this same provinciality and status as an outsider which provided the impetus behind Diefenbaker conception of the “new” Commonwealth. His idea of empire was also derived from a hinterland narrative of liberal imperial internationalism. In the same speech he delivered at the Dominion Day Dinner in London on 1 July 1957, Diefenbaker informed the audience that the concept of “unity in diversity” was Canada’s contribution to the Commonwealth. “One of the things that we, in Canada have contributed,” he argued, “is this: we have been able to bring together men and women of every racial origin, from all parts of the world, joined together in the building of a nation, maintaining its independence within the Commonwealth.”

It was in this way that Diefenbaker linked his nation-building narrative of “One Canada” to a foreign policy which was designed to help the “British” Commonwealth adapt to the new postwar world. His vision was of a land of immigrants—in Canada, mostly of European descent, to be sure—who, despite their ethnic and religious differences, were united because they were all citizens, subjects of the same monarch, and members of a diverse and unified Commonwealth.

Diefenbaker derived these ideas from a variant of imperialism which, as we have seen, was in vogue after the Second World War. One of its most articulate defenders in Canada was the historian, W.L. Morton, who argued that the nation’s only hope of maintaining a distinctive identity in North America was to remain within the framework of the Commonwealth. He shared with Diefenbaker a rural prairie background and an appreciation for the region’s

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diversity—a heterogeneity which he believed was echoed in the British imperial idea. In a passage that bears a striking resemblance to Diefenbaker’s Dominion Day Speech, Morton suggested that “… a Canadian may say that the Commonwealth can only be left to the workings of that evolution in freedom from which it rose and of the principle of association by which it lives.” “It may be,” he speculated, “that the Commonwealth has realized the ideal Burke uttered in urging reconciliation with America. Its trust is in ‘ties light as air, but as strong as links of iron,’ mutual respect, mutual tolerance, cooperation where cooperation is possible, understanding where it is not.” As Phillip Massolin has shown, Morton believed “Canada’s freedom emerged because of, not in spite of, colonial ties.”

And in Massolin’s eyes, it is the very belief that Canada’s best future lay within an imperial framework which renders one an anti-modern and a tory.

Morton might have been a tory—insofar as he was a not a republican but rather an advocate of empire, the British parliamentary tradition, and all its signs and symbols—but that did not make him anti-modern. His ideas of empire were very much in line with “modern” conceptions of liberal internationalism that were prevalent in the postwar period. Morton did not view the Commonwealth of Nations as a tool for perpetuating Anglo-Saxon superiority or ethnic conceptions of Britishness within or outside of Canada. Neither was it “a parachute which [would] let the British Empire down easy.”

Morton saw the Commonwealth growing organically out of the ashes of the Victorian empire as an institution that mirrored the values of parliamentary democracy and encouraged peace and stability within and among newly emerging nation states. “When India and the other Asian Dominions, with the exception of Burma, declared in 1949 their intention to remain within the Commonwealth,” he recalled, “there was

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830 Massolin, Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity, 204.
831 Ibid pp. 204-206.
832 Derek Bedson to John G. Diefenbaker, 10 March 1961 [quotes a letter from W.L. Morton] Archives of Manitoba: Derek Bedson Fonds, Box P6413 File 18.
immense satisfaction in Canada.” He felt “the decision meant that the Commonwealth was not merely a matter of British sentiment, but an association founded on principles universally valid, to which nations of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, despite two centuries of dependence, thought it important to adhere.” This new model would make it possible for a republic like India and other new nations like Pakistan and Ceylon to become “potent and influential members of a free association which at its best transcends differences of race and culture.”

He admitted that the new association might “not amount to a great deal in terms of material power.” But Morton believed, that “ultimately only ideas prevail; ultimately men cannot be moved except they be persuaded; ultimately freedom alone unites mankind.”

The idea that the Commonwealth could function as a bridge between so-called first and third world nations—a means of shoring up liberal democracy abroad through aid, trade, and the spread of culture—was not limited to the tory tradition or the British, for that matter. Getting one’s way through example, pressure, and influence was a defining feature of the soft imperialism of the United States, as well. Frank Underhill, whom we have already met as a Canadian historian of the liberal variety, made the connection in a series of lectures delivered on *The British Commonwealth* in the mid-1950s.

Much like Morton, he viewed the transformation of the “Victorian liberal Empire” into “a Commonwealth” as a phenomenon that could provide stability in the international system. But Underhill did not believe along with other tory imperialists that Canada’s contributions to the evolution of empire would, in his

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834 Ibid., 57.
words, “provide our chief claim for admission into Paradise when the last trump sounds.” He argued, rather, that it was the Victorian “liberal heretics” like Wilfrid Laurier and William Gladstone, men who did not believe in empire, who were the real empire-builders. To Underhill, the idea that empire might be a “permanent phenomenon”—a means by which “European peoples” could peacefully “live together with Asiatics and Africans as equals and as partners” within a “loose free-and-easy Commonwealth” was an essentially liberal idea. Thanks to liberal reformers, the idea of empire had thus evolved beyond ethnic conceptions of nationality to embody the liberal internationalism of the postwar period. “If this experiment, this project of a commonwealth, succeeds” he declared, “our poets will have cause indeed for celebrating the second Elizabethan age.”

As a proponent of liberal internationalism and soft imperialism, Diefenbaker wanted to be the statesman who would ring in this new Elizabethan age. He might have lacked diplomatic experience and was certainly not an expert in the field of modern internationalist theory, but he knew that the British Empire was one of the key places where thinking about international organization emerged. He felt at home in the “Empire of the imagination” and would make references to symbolic and spiritual ties that bound the “mother country” to her self-governing Dominions, the ritual of Empire Day, and a globe spattered with red. But he was also of the opinion that the old Victorian empire had to accommodate the changing times. Although often portrayed as a tory nationalist, Diefenbaker was really a “whig imperialist.” Like Underhill and Morton, he believed that the British had taught its colonies and dominions the lesson of English

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838 Ibid xv, xvi.
839 Ibid 15.
institutions and democracy and now had to adapt to the consequences.\textsuperscript{842} Evolutionary change promoted by the right kind of leadership would, he believed, be central to adapting the empire to meet the challenges posed by growing nationalism in the developing world and the communist threat.\textsuperscript{843}

Diefenbaker claimed to have been “a student of foreign affairs long before becoming a Member of Parliament,” but his campaign to become a world-class statesman began in earnest when he decided that the momentum gained from the landslide electoral victory of 1958 would best be spent on a world tour.\textsuperscript{844} In 1954, St. Laurent had embarked on a similar tour to the United Kingdom, Europe, and Asia which had produced significant political dividends at home and solidified his role as a leader of the Commonwealth abroad.\textsuperscript{845} Using St. Laurent’s itinerary as a template, although altering it so as to include only Canada’s Commonwealth and NATO allies, Diefenbaker planned his international coming out in the hopes that it would produce a similarly positive political affect. He left Ottawa bearing maple syrup, quaint handicrafts made by disparate First Nations groups, and leather-bound copies of Creighton’s two-volume biography of Sir. John A. Macdonald—gifts which embodied his nation building narrative of ethnic and religious pluralism, national development, economic nationalism, and “ready-aye-ready.”\textsuperscript{846} The National Director of the Progressive Conservative party, Allister Grosart, hired James R. Nelson to handle press-relations and provide information to news agencies in London, Paris, Germany, Italy, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand.

\textsuperscript{842} David Marquand makes a helpful distinction between “tory nationalists” and “whig imperialists” in \textit{Britain since 1918: The Strange Career of British Democracy} (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008), pp. 51-52.

\textsuperscript{843} “Address on what the Commonwealth Represents, 20 March 1962,” The Right Honourable John George Diefenbaker, First Among Equals: The Prime Minister in Canadian Life and Politics, Library and Archives Canada: \url{http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/2/4/h4-4016-e.html}

\textsuperscript{844} \textit{One Canada}, Vol. 1, 233.


\textsuperscript{846} “Gifts Given and Received—World Tour 1958”: JGDP VI PMO/Vol. 542/8555.
in advance of the prime minister’s arrival.\textsuperscript{847} Anecdotes and short biographical snippets recounting Diefenbaker’s prairie childhood, chance meetings with the Métis rebel, Gabriel Dumont, his service during the First World War, colourful career as a defence lawyer, and populist reputation were sent to major newspapers along the way—whether they requested them or not.\textsuperscript{848} It turned out that the interest in Diefenbaker’s World Tour was reciprocated—news agencies across Canada and even \textit{The Times} reported on every major speech and important meeting planned during the trip.\textsuperscript{849}

The public relations for Diefenbaker’s World Tour were masterfully planned, but his policy objectives and reasons for going were much less coherent. According to the press release that was published on 28 October 1958, “the tour is designed in particular to be a practical illustration of Canada’s belief in the importance of the Commonwealth in the world today.” “The Commonwealth is a family of nations,” he informed Canadians, and he was embarking on a “family visit.” “This widespread association of peoples of different cultures, creeds and colours, all sharing common ideals and traditions, dedicated to the common aim of peace,” would “in years ahead, play an even greater part in helping to promote greater understanding among nations, and in strengthening peace with freedom, throughout the world.” And it was for this reason that the Diefenbaker government was purportedly committed to preserving old imperial relationships and cultivating new ones within the framework of the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{850}

No one expected Diefenbaker to explain in a press release how sentimental ties might bind peoples possessed of different religious and ethnic backgrounds, across continents, and with external relations strategies and national interests of their own in a meaningful way. Yet given


\textsuperscript{848} For example, see “Information on John G. Diefenbaker sent to Australian Press by James R. Nelson (20 October 1958): JGDP VI P MO/Vol. 542/8545.

\textsuperscript{849} J.J.S. Garner to Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, Commonwealth Relations Office, November 1958.

all the fanfare surrounding his departure—the *The Globe and Mail* described it as being “almost embarrassing” in its presentation of Diefenbaker “as a sort of knight on a white horse riding out to lead the Commonwealth to an even greater destiny”—it was hoped that the prime minister might throw new light on pressing national and international issues.\(^{851}\) Diefenbaker had embarked on his journey at a time of great change in world affairs, after all: Britain was endeavouring to forge new economic links with Europe; France’s de Gaulle had just proposed a three-power directorate for the Western world that would have the US, the UK, and France in charge of NATO; movements in Moscow pointed towards greater flexibility in East-West Relations; there was a growing tendency on the part of some Commonwealth nations to opt for policies of neutrality in the Cold War; there was the looming presence of China and the question of its formal recognition. Each of these elements of diplomatic change would have important implications for Canada’s external policy.\(^{852}\) However, it was unclear from the start what Diefenbaker planned to do and what he wanted to achieve on his seven week sojourn.

    Before Diefenbaker’s arrival in London, Harold Macmillan was briefed by the High Commissioner in Canada, J.J.S. Garner, about the Canadian prime minister’s plans and the extent to which he might need a “tuning up” on the issues confronting Britain and Europe, the Middle East and Asia. According to Garner, Diefenbaker was on a “good will mission; he does not wish to get seriously involved in policy discussions.” As a consequence of all the nationalist sentiment stirred up by Diefenbaker earlier in the year during his wildly successfully national campaign, Garner reported that “the Canadian national ego expects the Canadian government to play some independent role in world affairs. This has its tiresome aspects, but the desire is not likely to diminish.” The tour would no doubt “strengthen Mr. Diefenbaker’s personal position… he would like to establish a reputation in Canada as an international statesman.” But the problem,

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\(^{852}\) Robinson, *Diefenbaker’s World*, 57; Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, pp. 140-141;
according to Garner, was that there was “little articulate political design in Mr. Diefenbaker’s attitude to the tour. His mind does not work that way. He rather tends to grope his way towards the understanding and handling of problems by drawing on personal experience and impressions derived from all kinds of sources.” Although “Mr. Diefenbaker is shrewd enough in dealing with personalities at home,” Garner warned that he would approach talks in Asia “with only a superficial knowledge and rather naïve ideas.” Indeed, he was so full of “good will” that he “may be over-anxious to demonstrate his friendliness and sympathy.” In particular, Garner observed that “Mr. Diefenbaker frequently gives vent in private talks here to criticism of the US policy and attitude (I have heard for example that he spoke in very strong terms to the Japanese Foreign Minister on his recent visit).” The Canadian prime minister needed to be schooled on “the desirability of caution in any criticisms of the US in Asian capitals might be emphasized and perhaps Prime Minister could find lead in by expounding his views on interdependence and the practical implications of it for UK policy.”

According to Basil Robinson, the only External Affairs expert to accompany Diefenbaker on his tour, the one-on-one tutelage that the Canadian prime minister received from Macmillan was extremely helpful. All the friendly advice in the world, however, did not prevent Diefenbaker from committing the faux pas of delivering a speech that advocated more Commonwealth trade at the very instant that Macmillan was steering Britain into negotiations with France on the spirit and shape of the European Economic Union. More than 5,000 members of the Commonwealth Empire Industries Association, a large section of Canadian expats in London, and abundant well-wishers arrived at the Royal Albert Hall on the evening of

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854 “Mr. Diefenbaker’s Visit,” Ottawa, October 1958, National Archives: KEW DO 35/5403.
855 Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 63; David Marquand has Macmillan engaging in talks in the inner recesses of Whitehall and later, with de Gaulle, on “widening the project” of the EEC beyond “the precious synthesis of the supranational and the national and undermining the solidarity of the six.” It seems that Macmillan wanted Britain to either take the lead in forming the new EEC or oppose it. Marquand, Britain since 1918, pp. 175-176,
4 November 1958 to hear Diefenbaker elaborate on his vision of “the new and living Commonwealth.”\footnote{Mr. Diefenbaker’s Simple Message, The Times, 5 November 1958; George Bain, Commonwealth Potential Stressed by Diefenbaker, The Globe and Mail, 5 November 1958.} Described by The Times as being “a man of great magnetism and force of character” who dominated the “audience with a fine idealistic blaze in his grey-green eyes, and his voice rises and falls in almost Gladstonian periods,” Diefenbaker was clearly in top form.\footnote{Mr. Diefenbaker’s Simple Message, The Times, 5 November 1958.}

Ever the campaigner, Diefenbaker triumphantly informed his listeners that what they were witnessing was a “Commonwealth renaissance—a new awakening of the possibilities that lie before us.” “My vision of the Commonwealth,” he declared, “is the vision of the contribution it can make to the welfare of mankind. For the spiritual enrichment of humanity, it offers the example of modern democratic government soundly based upon the lessons of the past.” “What is the Commonwealth” he asked? “It has no central government. There is no contractual obligation between the member states,” yet the “ties that hold it together are the ties of the spirit, the common dedication of men of good will to high ideals.” “We must turn to the Commonwealth,” he said dramatically, “as a thirsty man to a well, for those spiritual things on which all free men must lean—those guiding principles of good conduct in government, nationally and internationally.”\footnote{Address by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker to the Commonwealth and Empire Industries Association, Royal Albert Hall, London, 4 November 1958: JGDP Speeches Series 28 October to 17 November 1958/Vol. 25/722-725.}

In organizing the meeting on Commonwealth trade in Montreal the year before, Diefenbaker argued that Canada had taken the “first steps” in ensuring the diversification of trade within the Commonwealth and between the Commonwealth and other countries. At the conference, Macmillan’s government had recognized the importance of the role that preferences had played and continued to play in Commonwealth economic relations. With regards to the EEC, the United Kingdom acknowledged “the importance of making the provisions of the Free
Trade Area such as would ensure the widest possible trading opportunities and reaffirmed the undertakings about the safeguarding of Commonwealth interests in the UK market for foodstuffs.”859 For Diefenbaker, the opening up of new markets for the Commonwealth in Europe was just the beginning. Apart from increasing trade among Commonwealth members, he believed that the contribution of development assistance to newly independent countries would yield the sort of “commercial dividends inherent in the creation of expanding markets.” The rich nations of the Commonwealth thus had everything to gain from promoting and perpetuating their union with the third world. Their culture, capitalism, and liberal democracy would be deployed as weapons in the fight against the spread of communism. Diefenbaker’s put it in more biblical terms: “The Commonwealth,” he declared, “shines forth as a bright beacon in the black clouds of man’s folly, inhumanity and pride… shining forth from Westminster to all parts of the world, casting its light everywhere, without respect to colour, or race, or creed—or even form of government.”860

He received a standing ovation for his efforts. Afterwards, Macmillan mounted the stage and said of his Canadian counterpart, somewhat disingenuously, that “here was a man—great because he had the one vital thing that any great man must have—faith.”861 Having embarked on a Commonwealth tour of his own in 1957, Macmillan understood the importance of communicating his “faith” in enduring imperial connections. He knew that there were a number of people, especially in the old white settler dominions, who remained sensitive about ethnic connections to Britain, who had enjoyed the geopolitical status afforded by the attachment, who worried about where newly emerging nations in Asia and West Africa would align themselves.

859 This much is confirmed in the “Economic Briefs for Mr. Diefenbaker’s Visit to the UK at the Beginning of His Commonwealth Tour.” National Archives: KEW PRO DO 35/5403.
and, who at least to some extent, still relied on the old system of imperial preferences. For Macmillan, however, there was the potential that the wind might blow Britain in a different direction—towards Europe. Europe might have been a “non-politicized issue until 1960 in Britain,” but the prospect of pursuing a new, post-imperial “European vocation and identity” and a turn away from the protections afforded by the imperial preference did not sit well with the business leaders who were sitting in audience. Indeed, the short speech that Macmillan delivered as a follow-up to Diefenbaker’s was met with jeers from people in the audience who, as The Times suggested, had come “on one of the errands of the League of Empire Loyalists” to shout “something about European free trade and hypocrisy.” Diefenbaker, not for the first time, had embarrassed Macmillan. Although able to ride out the moment on his high horse, the Canadian prime minister would later pay for his rather undiplomatic decision to push for more imperial trade, knowing that his rhetoric would encourage the ire of a nascent anti-Europe movement in Britain. It did not win him any friends at Whitehall. And, as events would prove, his attitude would soon run against the tide of public opinion at home.

Yet, Diefenbaker’s speech had a resounding impact on the press and public. The massive amounts of fan mail that poured in offered him words of encouragement. “Dare to be [a] David. Dare to stand alone. Dare to have a purpose true. Dare to make it known,” suggested one Mrs. Selina Shuttleworth-King. “There is no doubt,” J.J.S. Garner grudgingly reported from Ottawa, that “on the public relations side the visit was indeed a resounding success. There was

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863 Marquand, Britain since 1918, pp. 177-178.

864 “Mr. Diefenbaker’s Simple Message,” The Times, 5 November 1958.

865 For more on the Canadian public’s reaction to Diefenbaker’s harping on Britain’s turn towards Europe, see, Blair Fraser, The Search for Identity: Canada 1945-1967 (Toronto: Doubleday, 1967), 186; Horne, Macmillan Vol. 2, 356; Bothwell, Alliance and Illusion, pp. 146-147.

866 Mrs. Selina Shuttleworth King to John G. Diefenbaker, 26 October 1958: JGDP PMO/544/8575.1.
very full appreciative comment about it in all the Canadian papers at the time.” Howard Green, the acting prime minister in Diefenbaker’s absence, told Garner that Diefenbaker “was quite ecstatic about his reception in London.”

Apart from personal accolades and evident boost in international standing in the eyes of the press, however, there were people for whom Diefenbaker’s speech was “so flocculent and high flown that it was difficult to draw any coherent message from it.” As Garner saw it, “his ringing tones went down well with the more emotional and unthinking, but I don’t think it did him very much good in more informed circles.” Cynical observers like Garner wondered how long Diefenbaker could keep up appearances before his mystical vision was exposed as being just that.

Among “more informed” circles in Europe, talk of a Commonwealth renaissance and the inclusion of the Commonwealth along with Britain within the European Economic Community was greeted with sangfroid. To be sure, when Diefenbaker arrived in Paris to meet General Charles de Gaulle on 5 November 1958, there were no specifically Franco-Canadian problems to speak of. Robinson described Diefenbaker’s meeting with General de Gaulle as “the most successful and enlightening of the entire tour.” Yet, while the two statesmen might have somehow bridged the gap between Paris and the Canadian prairies during their short meeting, they did not see eye to eye on de Gaulle’s proposal that the US, Great Britain, and France should govern NATO (a dream that would most people knew would come to naught). And perhaps more importantly, they did not agree on the future of the European Common Market.

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869 Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 64.
870 According to Robinson, NATO’s supreme allied commander, General Lauris Norstad, told Diefenbaker that “de Gaulle would realize his proposal [for a three-power directorate] could not materialize.” Diefenbaker’s World, 67.
Officials could not say whether the Common Market and the free trade area had been discussed. In an interview with *Le Monde* on 5 November 1958, however, Diefenbaker reiterated his position that it was “important for Europe to maintain wide commercial relations with countries in other parts of the world,” and Canada was “disturbed at the possibility of its [Western Europe’s] transforming itself into a block of nations pursuing a restrictive policy.”

Diefenbaker’s appeal to the French President apparently fell on deaf ears. De Gaulle later made it known that the Commonwealth would never have seriously been considered as a free trade partner of Europe. In January 1963, after having finally rejected the British bid to enter the European Economic Community, de Gaulle rationalized the decision by stating that “England in effect is insular, she is maritime, she is linked through her exchanges, her markets, her supply lines to the most diverse and often the most distant countries.”

To de Gaulle, the British were the British—they did not live on the Continent and would always look outwards towards the United States and the Commonwealth. Letting Britain and the Commonwealth join would mean risking Europe’s “dilution in an Atlantic community dependent on US direction.”

All this was in the future, however. When Diefenbaker left France for Germany in November 1958, he still believed the Commonwealth mattered to Europe. Upon arriving in Bonn he was greeted by Canada’s Ambassador to West Germany, Escott Reid, possibly one of the only seasoned diplomats left in Europe who believed in the Commonwealth. To the question as to whether or not the Commonwealth could “emerge from the chrysalis of empire” and “accommodate change,” Reid answered with a resounding yes. “The unique value of the Commonwealth to the world at large as well as to its members,” he argued, “is that it offers such

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872 “President de Gaulle Says it Rests with Britain: Objections to Entry to EEC and to US Offer of Polaris Missiles,” *The Times*, Tuesday 15 January 1963.

intimate association on the basis that transcends regional interest.” Echoing Diefenbaker, he argued that “it provides diversity in unity—it permits and encourages a number of countries from all over the world, each with its regional problems and attitudes, to meet together in an atmosphere of familiarity and mutual confidence.” There are some historians who doubt whether Reid’s philosophy on the Commonwealth had any real impact in the prime minister’s office. Yet Diefenbaker’s personal letters reveal the two corresponding often enough. The Prime Minister often “requested” Reid’s “personal views on the international situation, especially with regard to India, NATO and the Commonwealth.” What matters is that an important Canadian diplomat like Reid still believed in the Commonwealth—and that his letters of encouragement could only have inspired Diefenbaker’s sense of mission.

Not surprisingly, neither Reid nor Diefenbaker made much of an impression on Germany or the old German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. Reid noted in his memoirs that, in contrast to his experiences as a diplomat in India, “here in Bonn... our job was not negotiating but reporting on German views and policies.” Apparently, the opinions of Canada were not given or solicited. Diefenbaker and Adenauer got along, but the meeting was “instructive” only to Diefenbaker. For his part, Adenauer supported Britain’s bid to enter the EEC but believed that its appendage—the Commonwealth—was more trouble than it was worth. In July 1956, he reportedly told the Italian Defence Minister, Paulo Emilio Taviani, that the Commonwealth was

874 “Canada in World Politics: Lecture by Mr. Escott Reid, Canada Ambassador to Germany at the University of Cologne, 30 May 1961”: JGDP XIV/Vol. 14/E/129. Reid’s interest in imperialism dated back to his Round Table days. See Escott Reid, Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), pp. 50-54.
876 For example, see Diefenbaker correspond with Reid about India’s attack on Goa in 1961 and its impact on the United Nations and the Commonwealth. 21 December 1961: JGDP XIV/Vol. 14/E/129. Reid was also heavily involved in consulting with Diefenbaker with regards to his World Tour. See Escott Reid to J.R. Nelson regarding German Press Coverage of Diefenbaker’s Visit, 1958: JGDP XI PMO/ Vol. 542/8553. Reid remarked in his memoirs that “I had more influence on his thinking about international affairs than I had thought.” See Reid, Radical Mandarin, 303.
877 Reid, Radical Mandarin, 294.
878 Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 69.
“just as mirage.” He later acknowledged, along the same lines as de Gaulle, that “The Common Market simply cannot digest the Commonwealth’s economic potential.” In the end, he argued, “Britain’s role as a leader of the Commonwealth presents exceedingly difficult problems for her and for us.”

If European leaders clearly had doubts about the future of the Commonwealth, they did not share them with Diefenbaker. So, as it turned out, he finished the last leg of his European tour and then headed to Asia feeling very optimistic about the Commonwealth and the role which it and its members could play in world affairs. Diefenbaker travelled to India, Malaysia, and Indonesia in an effort to acquaint himself with the challenges that these new countries faced and cultivate relationships with their leaders so that he could be a better advocate for them and for the larger Commonwealth. Before travelling to India, he met and discussed Indo-Canadian relations with Leonard Brockington, who had served as special assistant to Mackenzie King and an Advisor on Commonwealth Affairs to the British Ministry of Information during the Second World War. Brockington saw the “possibility of a basic friendship between our new nation of the West and their ancient nation of the East without equal in international relations… that springs from the lasting respect for British institutions, the fear of American domination, and our own fortunate history and geography, which seem to save us from some of the criticism directed to so-called colonial powers.” As a middle power that was free of colonial baggage, Brockington believed that Canada could play a major role in forging links between the West and the developing world.

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880 “Dr. Adenauer says he is not retiring. Reference at Party Rally to Britain’s Commonwealth Difficulties,” The Times, Monday, 4 June 1962.
881 Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 71.
Diefenbaker’s conversations with the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the speeches he delivered while in India echoed these sentiments. Both the Indian and Canadian prime ministers disagreed with the United States over its refusal to recognize communist China. By suggesting that Canadian opinion was strongly in favour in recognizing Peking but was constrained by the strong arm of Washington’s polarizing Cold War policies, Diefenbaker sent a political message to Nehru that Canada was more inclined to take the middle way; by announcing that, “on behalf of the Canadian people, that we admire the degree to which, with your eyes on race relations, you lift your people to higher and higher opportunities and privileges,” he suggested that Canada might have something to learn from India; and, finally, by insisting that “our nations comprise one family, one that is able to sit down and discuss its common problems in a community of diversity and then arrive at a degree of unity,” Diefenbaker attempted to show that while Canadians believed in the common “heritage of freedom” they inherited from Britain that their vision of the Commonwealth was different from the old imperial idea based on race. For his part, Nehru told Diefenbaker that he had not forgotten the role that Louis St. Laurent and the Canadians had played in helping India “to continue in that close relationship” of the Commonwealth.” And in contributing aid through the Colombo Plan, “In Eastern Asia, in Indo-China, Canada and India undertook the responsibility which is partly continuing still.” “Above all,” Nehru recalled, it “was the friendly approach, an approach where one respects the other, even though one does not always agree, which brought us together and keeps us together and which will no doubt hold us together for a long time.”

Diefenbaker provided a powerful model for a new world order that emphasized economic and cultural interdependence and allowed for unity in diversity, but was it far enough removed

883 One Canada, Vol. 2, 107; Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World, 75.
from the racial assumptions and hierarchies of the nineteenth century to serve the needs of the mid-twentieth? While prime minister, Canada’s contributions to development aid increased from $15 to $50 million from 1958-1962 and a Commonwealth scholarships program was set in motion during the Commonwealth trade conference in Montreal. Increasing donor aid helped to create “expanding markets” for Canadian wheat in Asia and Africa and was generally good public relations. The Commonwealth’s soft power initiatives were designed to complement development plans run by the United Nations and the United States that were already in existence and aimed to promote economic interdependence between nations, spread “the heritage of Western civilization,” and contain the communist threat. Deployed in the defence of democracy, freedom as defined by the “West” and for monetary gain, the aid programs of the postwar years were as idealistic as they were paternalistic.

Diefenbaker’s relationships with his Commonwealth partners in Asia were rooted in the same “First World” paternalism. “I will always think of Pandit Nehru,” he (or his ghost writer) recalled, “as a transplanted Englishman… a Harrovian to the end.” The Britishness that Diefenbaker attributed to Nehru would vanish, however, “when “one expressed a view with which he disagreed.” According to the Canadian prime minister, it was at such times that Nehru would suddenly “place himself in a kind of oriental box.” As the historian David Webster has shown, in the postwar period Canadian policymakers viewed Canada’s peaceful evolution from colony to nation as a model for other Commonwealth members to follow. They strove for

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continued links between the new states and their old colonial masters,” he argues, “while hoping for capitalist development along Western lines—ideally Canadian lines.”

Diefenbaker’s perception of Nehru’s “oriental box” can also be seen in his treatment of Malaya and Indonesia. The warmth of his reception in Malaya and friendly relationship with the prime minister of the Federation of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman, made him feel welcome in Kuala Lumpur. “Canada is of particular interest to Malaya,” The Tunku declared, “even though our climates and our peoples are very different [sic], because Canada has tackled successfully the evolution of a Canadian nation from great cultural strains, maintaining the languages of both, at the same time developing a distinct personality and character of their own.” The Tunku congratulated Canada for having succeeded in weaving together in one whole fabric the logic and individualist of France and the traditions of Parliamentary democracy of the British Isles.” “And even more interesting,” he suggested, “is the fact that although Canada has absorbed millions of new citizens in waves of immigration all of them accept and fit into the cultural pattern and way of life the Canadians have designed for themselves and made their own.”

Hearing his own narrative read back to him was like music to Diefenbaker’s ears, as was the assurance that Malaya endeavoured to evolve along similar lines and promised to maintain its ties to Britain.

Diefenbaker’s impression of Ceylon, however, and the newly independent, non-Commonwealth country of Indonesia reveals the extent to which countries which did not toe the Canadian line were viewed to be stuck in an “oriental box.” In a speech delivered at the Ceylonese House of Parliament in late November, he thanked the audience for their warm

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891 Webster, *Fire and the Full Moon*, 4.
892 “Speech to be Made by His Excellency, the PM of the Federation of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Hag in Honour of John G. Diefenbaker”: JGDP XII Personal and Confidential/Vol. 12/A/404.
893 “Speech to be Made by His Excellency, the PM of the Federation of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Hag in Honour of John G. Diefenbaker”: JGDP XII Personal and Confidential/Vol. 12/A/404; Robinson, *Diefenbaker’s World*, 78.
reception and loftily referred to Ceylon as “the pearl of the east… a forerunner of liberality and enlightened toleration.” Like Canada, Malaya was a middling power, and he was happy to congratulate its people for their quest to develop along similarly democratic and liberal internationalist lines.\textsuperscript{894} Yet, according to Robinson, things did not go as well Diefenbaker’s meeting with the Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike. The Ceylonese prime minister had apparently been “unimpressed” by the outcome of the Montreal conference, thought little of the prospect of economic cooperation through the Commonwealth, and did not seem to fear the encroachment of communism in Asia.\textsuperscript{895} Developments in Indonesia were more troublesome still. Born amidst a revolution and having violently sought independence from the Netherlands in the late 1940s, Indonesia was a new country that many, including Diefenbaker, considered to be “turning to communism.” Because it was a non-Commonwealth country and exporting to a wild card nation other than wheat would not have been a popular policy at home, Diefenbaker, for the most part, turned his attentions away from Indonesia.\textsuperscript{896} Apparently, the Commonwealth had “a vital appointment with destiny” only with countries willing to build themselves in Canada’s image.\textsuperscript{897}

A cartoon published in the \textit{Halifax Chronicle Herald} during Diefenbaker’s world tour neatly encapsulates how Canadians viewed the prime minister’s external policies in the developing world. Bob Chambers’ cartoon has Diefenbaker sitting cross-legged in the middle of the jungle holding a map and instructing a group of “natives” about Canada. He lesson is interrupted by a European who had, in finding Diefenbaker, presumably come to the end of his “Find Dief Safari.” He approaches “the Chief” carrying a book written by Sir Henry M. Stanley.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[895] Robinson, \textit{Diefenbaker’s World}, 77.
\item[896] Webster, \textit{Fire and the Full Moon}, 75.
\item[897] “Notes on Diefenbaker’s meeting with Malayan Cabinet, November 29, 1958”: LAC RG/25/Vol. 9799/ 20-CDA-9-PM-Tour.
\end{footnotes}
entitled, *How I Found Livingstone* (1871). The caption reads, “Mr. Diefenbaker, I presume?”

In invoking the story of David Livingstone, the famous African explorer, missionary, imperial reformer, and advocate of commercial empire, the cartoon makes a number of key points about Diefenbaker’s world tour. The first is that Diefenbaker was on a civilizing mission which, while allowing for inevitable differences in ethnicity, religion and politics meant to drum up sentiment, loyalty, and interest in the “British” way of progress: evolution not revolution, belief in the British parliamentary tradition, loyalty (with the exception of India) to the Monarch, a willingness to promote commercial interdependence and to refuse the overtures of communists.

The second is that Diefenbaker was “lost” and perhaps naïve because he believed that indoctrinating new, patently anti-colonial peoples in the “spirit” of the Commonwealth would be successful. As Mark Mazower has shown with reference to the influence of Indian nationalist thought on the “rupture” of the Commonwealth in the postwar period, “what was bubbling up through the war was the deep dissatisfaction that had been growing since the start of the century throughout Asia in particular with the West’s attitude to international governance in general and the hypocrisy of its universalist rhetoric in particular.”

As Pearson had predicted, an alliance based on sentiment loyalty and interest could not survive if there were no longer shared sentiments, loyalties, and interests to be had.

In any case, the Canadian public did not care much about Canada’s external relations in the early spring of 1958, and it is safe to presume that when Diefenbaker returned from the final leg of his tour in Australia and New Zealand in mid-December, that they still didn’t. In one Gallup Poll, 41% of people believed “The greatest single problem facing Canada Today” to be “Unemployment and Depression” while “Foreign Affairs” ranked as a distant second at 8%.

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898 The cartoon can be found in the front pages of Robinson, *Diefenbaker’s World*.
At the same time, however, the tour seemed to help rather than hinder Diefenbaker’s standing as an international statesman in the popular press. “The prime minister,” Robinson reported, “came through it to his satisfaction. Nothing serious had gone wrong. Press coverage had been extensive and mostly favourable.”\textsuperscript{901} That Diefenbaker’s narrative had perhaps made an impression on the popular press in London is evident in \textit{The Times} “Supplement on Canada” that was published on 30 November 1959.

Many political prophets, not all of them Canadians, have foretold that the centre of the British Empire must eventually shift to the North American continent. There is the space, the resources, and the geographical detachment capable of sustaining a nation more populous, more opulent, and less vulnerable than the historic small group of islands in the North Sea; thence on the other hand spread out over all the oceans the arteries through which the life-blood of the great maritime organism always circulated. By sheer potential weight of population and wealth, the Canada of the coming centuries can scarcely remain a member of the Commonwealth without attaching the centre of gravity to itself.\textsuperscript{902}

Even as late as 1959, people believed in the potential of the Commonwealth and hoped that Canada would be the seat of this new kind of empire. Invoking “the myth of the North,” the article explained that the Canada which was going to become the central figure in the Commonwealth of Nations was “not Canada the frontier state.” To the Diefenbaker government, “the more Canada looks northward, where the possibilities of this great expansion lie, the more distinctively Canadian she will become.” Diefenbaker, “whose mind is the driving power for them all,” was an “enthusiast for Canada and at the same time an enthusiast for an articulated Empire and Commonwealth.” For many years, “Canadian statesmen distrusted the idea of a coordinated Empire, lest it imply restraint on Canadian national aspirations.” But Diefenbaker’s Canada was “too conscious of her own greatness in the world to have any reason for such misgivings.” He saw no contradiction between Canadian patriotism and the faith in a coordinated Commonwealth having unity in diversity and liberty in cooperation. If Canadians

\textsuperscript{901} Robinson, \textit{Diefenbaker’s World}, 82.
\textsuperscript{902} \textit{The Times} “Supplement on Canada” Monday 30 November 1959.
could “translate their ideals into concrete terms, they might yet give a notable lead to all their sister nations.”

_The Times_ might have bought Diefenbaker’s national and international narrative but the British government rejected it from the beginning. As J.J.S. Garner reported at the time, although Canada’s record in assistance to other Commonwealth countries increased during Diefenbaker’s tenure in office, and although the prime minister had good, if politically tinged, intentions, “he had,” however, ‘never thought through’ the question of how Commonwealth cohesion could and should be increased.” After his World Tour he failed to really give Parliament—or Canadians—any account of what the world tour actually achieved. “The plain fact,” Garner argued, was “that the high hopes originally pinned to the replacement of the stale Liberal regime were unrealistic. The publicity given abroad to the resounding speeches of Mr. Diefenbaker tended to obscure his complete lack of administrative experience. The extent of disappointment is proportionate to the exaggeration of hopes.”

Indeed, even as he remained fundamentally loyal to the United States, Diefenbaker had tried to find a second option through which Canada could take independent political action. Through the mechanisms of the Commonwealth and the United Nations, he believed that Canada could become an international moderator in matters which did not directly involve NATO. In particular, he believed that building up habits of cooperation with unaligned powers was the best means by which Canada could wield its middle power status. Once again the British judgement of Diefenbaker’s actions is instructive:

How far is the tour part of a conscious (or even subconscious) bid for co-leadership with the UK of the Commonwealth? Is Mr. Diefenbaker looking for the mantle of Mackenzie King? Is he anxious to establish himself as a sort of Western Nehru—the friend of all and the great mediator? How far is Canadian political and official leadership consciously or unconsciously resentful of the UK leadership in the Commonwealth and aspiring to share it? How far does the Canadian desire for a middle role

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As it turned out, Diefenbaker’s overtures to the Commonwealth weren’t helpful at all. Soon public opinion would catch up to those held by the British diplomats. As the Canadian novelist, Gabriel Gersh put it, as early as 1956: “The old British imperialist outlook was something which was shared by the man-in-the-street; shared only in a dim confused, emotional fashion, but shared nevertheless. But as far as British consciousness of today is concerned, interest in the new Commonwealth is almost non-existent. In this sense, the passing of the old imperial tradition has simply left a vacuum.” That vacuum would be filled by the United States.

Conclusion

The passing of the old imperial tradition might have left a vacuum, but in the 1950s it was not necessarily clear that it was the United States that would fill it. At the time, Canada’s place in the world looked quite different from any the nation had previously occupied. Through the war and the first postwar years, as Tom Kent—one of the key figures responsible for rebuilding the Liberal party after its defeat in 1957—observed: “no one could tell with confidence what were temporary conditions and what were fundamental changes. It would take time to adjust, mentally and emotionally.” For this reason, the prisms through which Grits and Tories envisaged the brave new postwar world and the changes that it wrought were not made of materials that were entirely new—although new elements were clearly visible. In a volume of learned essays on the outlook for postwar Canada published in 1950, the historian and diplomat, George Glazebrook, went so far as to conclude that “national maturity brought no fundamental change in the interests of Canada in world affairs or in the principles on which her policy had been based. The change consisted rather in a growing appreciation of the necessity of assuming responsibility for the pursuit and maintenance of interests and principles already deeply embedded in the country’s historic development.”

While the continuity emphasized by Glazebrook was real enough, Canadians were conscious of great changes in the environment in which their embedded interests and principles would be pursued. For instance, Diefenbaker and all of his contemporaries were confronted with British strategic shrinkage and were forced to reframe and rethink their conceptions of the Canadian identity and its role in the world. The end of empire was a moment in which the nation and the citizen’s participation in it was said to constitute a problem in historical self-

understanding—one which both Liberals and Conservatives claimed to be explicitly contending. Yet at this key historical juncture, it would be Conservatism and not Liberalism that successfully bridged the gap between old and new.

“The Diefenbaker Moment” denotes the moment and the manner in which Conservatism came to occupy mainstream national political discourse in the late 1950s. It is a name for a moment in time in which Canada was seen as confronting its own temporal finitude—or, as Diefenbaker dramatically put it—its survival. For him, a turning point had been reached in which Canada would have to finally decide whether it was a “Colony or a Nation.” That he was referring to the prospect of Canada being reduced to the status of an American client state was a given. Yet it was Diefenbaker’s conceptualization of how to make the nation morally and politically stable in a stream of events that were conceived by many as essentially disruptive to its being that was altogether new. Using language borrowed from political battles of the past, he spoke of an age-old confrontation of “Liberalism” and “Conservatism”: “tradition,” “parliamentary freedom,” “new frontiers,” and “national policies,” versus, “statism,” and “continentalism.”

The study of the revival of Conservatism in the 1950s is the study of how Diefenbaker and his Tory cohort pursued the intimations of these words, images, symbols—stories—in new political, economic, and cultural contexts. Diefenbaker was one of a number of greater and lesser Conservative men and women engrossed in the negotiation of British decline and what they viewed as the ugly reality that the first and essential interest of Canada had become the United States. Quite beyond the end of empire and the rise of American superpower, however, they faced Soviet imperialism, religious decline, the influx of new varieties of non-British immigrants, foreign investment, mass culture, mass consumption, and demographic change—all

909 Diefenbaker discussed the problem explicitly in a speech entitled “Colony or Nation” which he delivered, at various times, throughout the general election of 1957: JGDP, Private and Confidential, Vol. 11/380.1.
of which elicited a political response that required something more than the received wisdom embodied in old partisan narratives. The moment is named for Diefenbaker because it was his vision and his whirlwind campaign which, for a split second, seemed to best fit the barely discernable dimensions of this new political and cultural age.

Diefenbaker’s Conservatism was conceived in the historical dimension and the product of partisan struggle. It told the story of an epic, transatlantic, and historic war with Liberalism—two visions of the good society which, for centuries, had fought for the middle-ground of mainstream political discourse. In this he was a product of his time. Both the Conservative and Liberal parties made a point of tracing their warring ideological heritages back and back, steeping their language in the partisan debates that sometimes went as far back as the seventeenth century. Perceiving that postwar Canada was in the midst of a period of ideological flux, they looked to the past to establish continuity with historical political principles and the nation-building visions of their forefathers. The Tories made heroes of John Pym, Edmund Burke, Benjamin Disraeli, Sir John A. Macdonald, Winston Churchill, and Quintin Hogg while the Liberals traced their origins in the work of John Stuart Mill, Lord Durham, George Brown, and Wilfrid Laurier.

What resulted was the fashioning of warring versions of Canadian history that featured the same chains of events and historical actors but glorified two competing political philosophies. The Tories and Grits had long been honing signs and symbols as weapons to be used in the heat of battle to link citizen and nation, community and individual, identity and action. After years of political struggle, through frequent retellings and deployments, the Conservative and Liberal narratives of the postwar period had been abstracted until they were reduced to deeply encoded and relevant sets of symbols, icons, keywords, and historical clichés. In this form they became poles of meaning around which the two leading political parties framed
their rhetoric, imagined their partisan identities, and determined the substance of the stories they
told and sold to the public. It is for this reason that the systems of values and meanings on which
Diefenbaker drew cannot be understood by simply analyzing his personal foibles or tracing his
rise and fall through a series of events. Partisan narratives are built out of ideologies and are
stories fitted to character, circumstance, and experience—they are relational. Only by giving an
historic account of the uses and periodic revision of the symbolic language of Liberalism and
Conservatism in Canadian political discourse and tracing the dialectical interchange between
these two competing national narratives can we grasp the meaning of Diefenbaker’s rhetoric,
actions, his public image, and the mode and manner in which it was conceived.

After the Second World War, the main aim of the Conservative party was to convince
voters that there was a viable alternative to Liberalism in North America. What was at issue was
not a fight over the implementation of social security or state-sponsored national projects—on
these and other policies most Conservatives and Liberals could find room to agree. For the
Tories, the only thing to be done was to revive the relationship of war by re-polarizing national
political discourse. They did it not by attacking the essential points of Liberal party programmes
but rather by framing debates around a battle between good and evil, national symbols, and
questions of identity. In the process, from 1942 until the mid-1950s, the Tories translated the
ideology of progressivism and “natural Conservatism” into the language of popular myth,
modernizing both the traditional Tory nation-builder and the setting of his adventure. The so-
called post-war Liberal consensus was construed as an ontological problem that cut to the very
quick of postwar Canada. Made up of drama, plot, explanation, and selective criteria, the
Conservatives built their partisan narrative for the purpose of reclaiming a past that had been
buried for decades underneath false Liberal shibboleths.
Fragmented, contradictory, partial, and romantic, the Tory narrative was fashioned as an antidote to the boredom of Liberal technocracy—that is, not until Diefenbaker seized it, modernized its application, and made it his own. To be sure, he was the lucky inheritor of the new-fangled Conservative narrative, the direct beneficiary of the consequences of Liberal arrogance and a subsequent turn in the tide in the party’s political fortunes. But all evidence suggests that only a politician possessed of a certain charisma and the political instincts that lent themselves well to the new business of persuasion could have defeated the Liberals in the general election of 1957 and been such a smashing success in 1958. Diefenbaker and his public relations team understood that when the dominant communication technology changes a political party must adapt to the new media in order to win. The introduction of television to Canadian politics transformed the public sphere, changing the substance and the quality of national political discourse. While leading Liberals failed to recognize these changes and adapt their narrative to the new modes of political struggle that television made possible, Diefenbaker’s Progressive Conservatives recognized the mutually beneficial relationship that could be forged between modern public relations techniques, new communications technology, and policy making. The combination enabled Diefenbaker’s to effectively occupy the centre of mainstream political discourse and render his New National Policy into a hero-tale worthy of the postwar era.

For the first time in history, the outcome of Canadian general elections turned on the new politics of celebrity. By the 1960s, television would render politics into a spectator sport of national and international proportions. Yet even as early as 1957, celebrity had become a new mode of communication in Canada in which complex political narratives—keywords, symbols, metaphors—could be embodied in a single public persona. Through careful and conscious image craft, Diefenbaker became a receptacle of voters’ national dreams. Canadians were worried about being colonized—by corporations, Americans, and communists. The ethnic and religious
connections on which so many of them had built their communities had been uprooted. On the other hand, ethnic minorities were looking for a champion—someone who recognized that they, too, were Canadians, loyal to the same Queen and subject to the same laws. Canadians were beginning to wonder whether federal elections were still valid indicators of their choices. They questioned whether they would have a part to play in building a nation that could challenge the Soviet threat and build better children and Sputniks. Diefenbaker’s New National Policy was an all-encompassing response to these hopes and fears. On offer was a therapeutic ethos that was couched in the black-and-white terms of a John Wayne Western: that clearly differentiated good from evil; that assuaged voters’ anxieties about the uncertain future and puffed up their egos with talk of conquering new frontiers and quelling powerful foes; that was designed to appeal to old Britishers who clung to their traditions and at the same time it meant to appeal to young people—not necessarily born of British stock—with promises of risk, adventure, and opportunity.

By referring to history and politics in terms of war, Diefenbaker sought to tap into the troubled psyches of his audiences and encourage them to question the Liberal status quo. His political persona and pan-Canadian nationalism were fashioned as a form of resistance that confronted Liberal power. His vision was not based on the logic of right and sovereignty but rather on the more strategic and warlike logic of partisan struggle. He harkened back to a discourse of Conservative nationalism that spoke of the antiquity of his party ideology, brought great ancestors back to life, and rediscovered heroes who had founded the nation. The iconic image of John A. Macdonald was the focal point of his campaigns—an easily recognizable, national figure who Diefenbaker could emulate and whose mission and vision could breathe new life into a corrupt model of government that had prevented Canada from achieving its true national destiny. The mythical north was the obvious location for a new imperial escapade— a
wild untamed setting that could bind Canadians together in their efforts to conquer it, papering over cleavages created by class, ethnicity, regionalism, nationalism, and even political affiliation along the way.

For Diefenbaker and his advisors, the National Policy was more than a device for trade-marking a political candidate. It was an authentic metaphor that was descriptive of the ways in which they hoped to use government power and the kinds of struggles in which they wished to engage. A manly and muscular national development strategy that matched the projects undertaken by Macdonald was the perfect answer to fears about the growing economic and political influence of the United States and the feminization of Canadian culture by the forces of modernity. It also reflected a growing trend of thought which advocated economic expansion, encouraged new national projects, and the pursuit of an imaginative and flexible immigration policy that would, in turn, allow for the opening of new territories and well-planned resource extraction. Central to Diefenbaker’s promise of an end to the value-neutral, laissez-faire capitalism of the Liberal government was the marriage of moral mission and macroeconomic policy that was at the heart of the welfare state. Rather than focus on the fine details of their nation-building plan, however, Diefenbaker and his team of public relations experts couched their narrative in structures and traditions of storytelling that disarmed critical analysis. The result was a story of cause-and-effect, one that resembled a theory of history more than a specific blueprint for public policy. Its central purpose was to summon the nation as a whole to undertake in to undertake a heroic engagement in nation-building and appoint Diefenbaker to do the job.

As we have seen, Diefenbaker was still sitting on the backbench when the Tories began to mobilize to defeat St. Laurent’s Liberals. Among them was a busy and effective cohort of Conservative women. During the Cold War, the desire to reassert traditional gender roles often
determined the ways in which Conservative women chose to engage in politics. Tensions between club women and parliamentary spouses who chose to pursue their political activism within the segregated realm of the Progressive Conservative Women’s Association and party women who pursued public office and endeavoured to take up roles within the mainstream party organization emerged through the course of the 1950s.

The divisions among them reflected recurring tensions between continuity and change, a theme which is crucial to understanding the extent to which ideas about the appropriate roles for women were in flux in the postwar period. Undoubtedly, party women recognized the extent to which the dual-gender party and political system kept women active within politics but stymied their ability to rise up the ranks and take on the more powerful positions of policymakers and tacticians. Perhaps not surprisingly, even the careers of prominent Tories like Ellen Fairclough were hampered by the ideology of separate spheres which designated “domestic” jobs and activities for women. Despite these obstacles to full and equal participation in public life and their differences as to whether or how far they needed to surmount them, party and club women rejected what they viewed as “radical” variants of feminism. At bottom, even as they pursued different routes to political activism, they remained loyal to the party and played a key role in shaping postwar renderings of Conservatism from the grassroots to the national level. They created integral connections between women voters and the federal political party in their capacities as auxiliary salesladies, parliamentary wives, and Members of Parliament. Their ability to translate the party line and make it relevant to the everyday lives of their audiences—made up of both men and women—helped lay the groundwork for Diefenbaker’s electoral successes.

Figuring prominently in the relationship between conceptions of Conservative womanhood and Conservatism and the fashioning of partisan “values” was Canada’s connection
to the Crown and Commonwealth. The manner in which the PC Women’s Auxiliary and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire performed their domestic, womanly roles during Queen Elizabeth II’s visit to Canada in 1957 and the more extensive Royal Tour of 1959—putting on teas, organizing parades, luncheons, the purchase and giving of gifts, and other ceremonials—was intrinsic to their identities as Tory women and Canadian citizens. All evidence suggests that they embraced the historic rituals and ceremonies and that their performances reinforced their sense of belonging to a larger, imperial community which set them apart from the other (American, Soviet, French Canadian, immigrant and so on). And like so many Canadians, Grits, Tories, Social Creditors, and Socialists alike, Tory women considered the Monarchy as a crucial fixture of Canada’s parliamentary democracy as well as the primary symbol of Canada’s uniqueness in North America. How far they understood or accepted Diefenbaker’s attempt to reframe the idea of the Commonwealth and the Crown to better reflect changing postwar circumstances, and more specifically, its religious and ethnic pluralism is a subject for further study. As we have seen, shifts in thinking about the Commonwealth, from conceptions based on ethnicity and race towards the more inclusive concept of “unity in diversity,” were essential to Diefenbaker’s Conservative narrative throughout his tenure in office.

That the Commonwealth would soon be the focal point of a debate about the Canadian identity — among those who cherished the old imperial connection; those who envisioned its transition into a useful mechanism for encouraging the spread of “liberal” democracy and capitalism; and those who sought to abolish the connection altogether and invent new traditions

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910 On how performances—like those at the celebrations of Quebec’s tercentenary, “seemed to have been built on the dual propositions that history would make a nation and that history could be best understood in performance,” see H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec’s Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 6; On performances and the fabrication of the Other, see Greg Dening, *Performances* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), pp. 191-206.

911 For more on the participation of Tory women, the IODE and other clubs and organizations in the planning of the Royal Tour of 1959, see “List of Correspondence Relating to the Royal Tour of 1959,” December 1957: JGDP/PMO/Vol. 107/VI/1659.
and symbols that recognized Canadian autonomy—makes the Royal Visit of 1959 a compelling example of the failure of Diefenbaker’s narrative to effectively transition into the 1960s. The initial idea to invite the Queen and Prince Philip to the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959 had actually been Louis St. Laurent’s. St. Laurent and Lester Pearson were supporters of Queen Elizabeth II and the Monarchy in general as both a real and symbolic element in national political life. But the great Royal Tour of 1959 was Diefenbaker’s brainchild, designed to elicit a level of fanfare across the country that would call attention to the importance of the monarchy to defining and defending a distinct national culture which would serve as the basis of a unique Canadian identity. He viewed the tour within the imperial dimension: as an event that would rekindle citizens’ interest in the mixed constitution and serve as a palpable example of their links to the grand, liberal and democratizing mission of the newly constituted, pluralistic Commonwealth. In this way, Diefenbaker attempted to re-affirm Canada’s newfound stature as an independent and sovereign nation in the postwar era.

In planning the tour Diefenbaker did not intend to “Canadianize” the monarchy but rather to reaffirm its relevance to contemporary Canadians and the importance of their membership within the larger Commonwealth of nations. The British Empire, the cohesion of which had once depended on common allegiance to an indivisible Crown, had by the 1950s become a Commonwealth of realms and one republic. In 1948, the British Nationality Act had removed the status of “subject of the King” as the basis of British nationality, and substituted for

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913 In a letter to Winston Churchill, written in January 1952, St. Laurent said: “The Crown is more than the symbol of our association in the British Commonwealth; it is also the symbol of unity in each of our nations. It is in the name of our common King that we discharge in both countries the responsibilities of government.” Quoted in H. Duncan Hall, “The British Commonwealth of Nations,” American Political Science Review, XLVII (Dec., 1953), 1011. Pearson, as we have seen, was an anglophile. On Pearson’s opinions about the role of the monarchy in Canada, see Lester B. Pearson, Mike, Vol. 3 (Toronto: Littlehampton Books, 1976), 301.
914 Phillip Buckner argues that the Royal Tour of 1959 was not of any “imperial significance.” See Buckner, “The Last Great Royal Tour,” in Canada and the End of Empire, Buckner, ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 86.
915 Buckner argues that Diefenbaker aimed to “Canadianize” the monarchy because he views Diefenbaker’s idea of the Commonwealth as limited to the local, Canadian context. See Buckner “The Last Great Royal Tour,” 86.
allegiance to the Crown the concept of separate citizenships combined together by statute. The act brought about constitutional change because it altered the basis of subjecthood and nationality and brought about a corresponding revolution in the nature of the unity of the dominions. That the Queen belonged “equally to all her realms and to the Commonwealth as a whole” was meant to signify that all the nations of the Commonwealth were self-governing, and equal. The monarchical title was thus revised to signify the unity of a Commonwealth of sovereign and diverse nations, altered to become representative of a common allegiance held by republics and constitutional monarchies with separate and distinct nationalities.

In 1952, the Canadian Parliament officially bestowed the title of Queen of Canada on Queen Elizabeth on her accession to the throne. Diefenbaker made much of the Queen’s new label and took great pains to emphasize, especially during her short visit to the United States in 1959, that Elizabeth II was the Queen of a sovereign Canada. As Buckner argues, “for British Canadians the Crown was a symbol of Canada’s British identity”—and so it was for those among whom Britishness was an essential ingredient of the Canadian identity in the postwar period. Yet a closer look at the rhetoric employed by the Diefenbaker government and the Queen herself to describe Canada’s links to the Monarchy did not focus on race or ethnicity but instead on the concept of “unity in diversity” and the “Commonwealth family of nations” that the Crown represented. The television brought the Queen and this subtle new message into living

916 Patrick Gordon Walker, *The Commonwealth*, pp. 187-188. On the Queen’s idea to create distinct flags that would reflect her position as “Queen” of each and every sovereign dominion, see “Queen’s Flag,” George P. Vanier to Government House, Ottawa, 8 September 1961: JGDP/PMO/Vol. 107/VI/1651.
919 Buckner, “The Last Great Royal Tour,” 118.
920 For example, listen to the Queen’s farewell speech: “1959 Royal Visit—Farewell Speech,” *Royal Tour Diary*, *CBC News*, 1 August 1959: [http://archives.cbc.ca/society/royalty/clips/234/](http://archives.cbc.ca/society/royalty/clips/234/); During the first meeting of the Cabinet Committee on the Royal Visit, during which policies and the itinerary of the Royal Visit were extensively discussed, the rhetoric was couched in the “unity and diversity” theme: JGDP/VI/Vol. 221/2008.
rooms across the country in an effort to maximize her contact with “the people” and enhance her celebrity status. As she travelled to the far reaches of the North and from East to West, to Yellowknife and Uranium City, the International Nickel Company in Sudbury, the new international airport at Gander, the Queen’s tour neatly embodied Diefenbaker’s Frontierism and the image of an independent, modern, and industrial nation that he wanted the world to see. In all this, the focus of the Royal itinerary was not so much on Britishness but on making connections between Diefenbaker’s Frontier Message, his conception of one Canada, and the larger Commonwealth. This shift in thinking represents a subtle but elemental change that Diefenbaker attempted to make in the Conservative narrative and the stories it told about Canada and its place in the world. As we have seen, his effort to turn the focus away from British conceptions of ethnicity towards an all-encompassing Canadianism was also reflective of an international scene in which old forms of empire based on race and the European right to rule were no longer deemed acceptable.

The controversy surrounding “the last great Royal Tour” of 1959, however, suggests that Diefenbaker was ineffective in communicating this new rendering of Tory imperial internationalism. To an even larger extent, it indicates that his narrative failed to fit the changing conceptions of identity and citizenship held by a growing number of Canadians. The divisions growing among the public with regards to the importance of viewing the Monarchy as an essential element of Canadian cultural and political life were easy enough to see. Pierre Berton took up his pen before the Queen even arrived to mock the ceremonials, repetitive handshaking, the requisite visits to the houses of “ordinary” peoples, and the general phoniness of it all. Tabloid’s Joyce Davidson—a CBC reporter for the earliest televised current affairs program with light entertainment to air in Canada—drew the wrath of anglophiles everywhere when she told

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Dave Garroway of NBC’s Today show on 18 June 1959 that, “I, like the average Canadian, am rather indifferent to the Queen’s visit. I am not overwhelmed.”

A subsequent Gallup poll tellingly indicated that while 64 per cent of respondents believed that Davidson’s comments were out of order, only 48 per cent of those polled were “significantly interested” in the royal tour.

The topic as to how far Canadians were divided on the subject of the Monarchy and the British connection in general was further explored in an article published on 23 June 1959 in the Toronto Daily Star on “The Royal Visit Row: What does it Mean?” The article made a direct connection between the Davidson “scandal” and changing conceptions of citizenship in Canada. “The storm around the Joyce Davison affair,” it explained, “is far more important that its author. It cannot be safely ignored by those who care about Canada’s future. For this controversy, like a flash of lightening, has suddenly illuminated a deep chasm between Canadians on the question of their identity—how they see themselves and what they want to be, as a people.” Following the article was commentary provided by op-ed contributors who explored the question “What is the Alternative to Royalty?” The titles of their short statements ranged from “Loyal Subjects,” “Utterly Disgusted [by Davidson],” and “Leading with a Chin” to “Changed Times,” “Foolish Spending,” and “Clean it Up.”

It is easy to chalk up the controversy surrounding the Royal Tour of 1959 as revealing a growing chasm between those who valued Britishness as basic element of the Canadian identity and those who did not. A number of Canadian scholars have highlighted the deep transition in the 1950s and 60s during which representations of a British anglophone identity gave way to one based on a rights-based concept of citizenship. Yet Diefenbaker’s attempt to reframe the

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926 For more on the displacement of older attachments to the British Empire during the 1960s, see José Ignatua, The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Brian
Commonwealth connection to reflect its new inclusivity and replace old ethnic conceptions of Britishness makes the story a little more complicated. He attempted to forge concrete links between his vision of “One-Canada” at home and a united and diverse Commonwealth abroad. That Diefenbaker failed in this attempt should not preclude us from exploring what exactly he was trying to do.

Unfortunately for Diefenbaker, when the Queen departed from Halifax for home on 1 August 1959, she left him standing on the precipice of political failure. Earlier that year, Diefenbaker announced the immediate cancellation of development of the Avro Arrow (CF-105), a Canadian-designed, advanced interceptor aircraft being built in Toronto, raising questions about the government’s style and judgment, and eventually weakening his confidence in his once prized political intuition. Unemployment continued to grow in 1959, 1960, and 1960 despite infusions of public spending. Tight financial times and competing conceptions of macroeconomic policy precipitated a battle in the spring summer of 1961 between the Bank of Canada and its governor, James Coyne, who favoured restrictive interest rate policies and anti-inflationary measures and Diefenbaker, who desired to expand the economy and increase public spending. The very public fight became notoriously known as “the Coyne affair.” The election of the brash, young, and popular John F. Kennedy in 1960 precipitated the end of the easy relationship between Canada and the United States. Diefenbaker’s reluctance and eventual refusal to accept nuclear warheads intended for Canadian Bomarc missiles inflamed the atmosphere of distrust that already existed between him and Kennedy. His relationship with Harold Macmillan became equally as strained when the Canadian prime minister decided to reject South Africa’s renewal of its membership within the Commonwealth in March 1961 and made public objections to Britain’s bid to join the European Economic Union. As the Quiet

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Revolution transformed Quebec, encouraging appeals for fairer treatment of the country’s Francophone minority what seemed to some as an archaic celebration of the Commonwealth, his failure to include more Quebeckers within his cabinet and to understand the potential explosiveness of French Canadian nationalism led to the collapse of the federal Conservative party in Quebec. Diefenbaker’s own cabinet ministers began to criticize his apparent lack of direction and indecision. To top it all off, in October 1962 his failure to unhesitatingly support Kennedy’s appeal for solidarity during the Cuban Missile Crisis made him appear to many as being a unreliable ally in the fight against Communism.

The list of Diefenbaker’s failures as a leader, his lack of administrative ability, and apparent megalomania is a long one and has been discussed at length in a number of good and some very bad political biographies. But the one that stands out as a commentary on the failure of Diefenbaker’s vision is George Grant’s famous account of the defeat of Canadian nationalism in Lament for a Nation. According to Grant, “the impossibility of conservatism” in the postwar era “is the impossibility of Canada.” In giving Diefenbaker the largest ever majority government (by percentage of seats) in Canadian history on 31 March 1958, Grant contended, “we attempted a ridiculous task in trying to build a conservative nation in the age of progress, on a continent we share with the most dynamic nation on earth.” “The current of modern history,” Grant lamented, “is against us.”

Critics like the Maclean’s columnist, Andrew Potter, have argued that Grant was “simply wrong” in that “the impossibility of conservatism in Canada is... the impossibility of a tory form of social conservatism in a multicultural and pluralistic society.” It is my hope that this dissertation has proven Potter, and all the critics who locate Diefenbaker on the side of the

928 Ibid., xiii.
anti-moderns instead of viewing him as a transitional figure, wrong. Diefenbaker was someone whose language was appropriated from Tory-narratives past for the purpose of establishing continuity; who tried to modernize the Tory narrative and push his party to better reflect changing postwar circumstances; who recognized that television was a new medium that could revolutionize the ways that national narratives were told and sold directly to the masses; who struggled to bridge the gap between older conceptions of Canadian identity based on British imperial ties and new ones based on civic definitions of citizenship and national sovereignty.

George Grant was wrong, too, in his suggestion that conservative nationalism died with Diefenbaker. Red Tories like Senators Hugh Segal, Marjorie LeBreton, Lowell Murray, and the subsequent Progressive Conservative Prime Ministers, Joe Clark and Brian Mulroney, have, in different ways, all drawn on Diefenbaker’s narrative to defend the progressive legacy of the Conservative party as it has been increasingly dominated by neo-conservatism. The neo-conservatives look to Diefenbaker’s heritage, too, in order to bolster their legitimacy and fabricate continuity between their vision of Canada and those of old Tory heroes as Macdonald and Diefenbaker. 929 Political rhetoric and partisan narratives are, after all, relational. They are the products of political struggle with their philosophical counterparts; they demand and enable selective appropriation in their construction of ideas of partisan and national identities. They don’t die—they change.

929 For more on Red Tory’s drawing on the Diefenbaker “legacy” to highlight their progressive roots, see Interview with Hugh Segal, 30 July 2007; Interview with Marjorie LeBreton, 30 July 2007; Interview with Lowell Murray, 2 March 2007; Interview with Joe Clark, 22 April 2007. Stephen Harper paid a visit to the University of Saskatchewan on 9 September 2010 to announce new funding for the Diefenbaker Centre. “Our government,” Harper announced, “continues to support the Diefenbaker Canada Centre as an important national treasure and testament to the Conservative party’s heritage.”

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