

Canada and Speeches from the Throne

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Narrating a Nation, 1935-2015

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Introduction: The Throne Speech, Leaders' Day, National Identity and History 403/803

RAYMOND B. BLAKE

The Speech from the Throne is one of the most important moments in the Canadian Parliamentary calendar. The Throne Speech itself is an occasion that can be traced to the 14th century, if not earlier, and is filled with tradition, and pomp and ceremony, as old as the parliamentary system that emerged first in the United Kingdom and later adapted to Canada's constitutional monarchy. The Speech from the Throne signals the beginning of a new Parliament, and it lays out the government's agenda for the upcoming session. Until the Speech from the Throne has been read, the members of the House of Commons, elected by popular vote, and the Senate, the Upper House in Canada's bicameral parliamentary whose members are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, cannot begin the nation's business. No bills can be introduced, no debate can take place and, even as the elected members of Parliament, they cannot vote on any measures or begin the people's business.

In the British tradition on which Canada's Parliamentary system is based, the reigning Queen or King, or their representative, reads the Speech from the Throne, but it is the Prime Minister, his Cabinet and their close advisors who craft the Speech. In Canada, the Queen has read the Speech from the Throne on only two occasions – on 14 October 1957, while John G. Diefenbaker was Prime Minister, and on 18 October 1977, when Pierre Elliott Trudeau was Prime Minister. On all other occasions the Speech from the Throne has been read by the Governor General who is the Head of State in the Queen's absence.

In Canada, the Queen or her representative reads the Speech because, constitutionally and formally, Parliament is convened and sits at the pleasure of Her Royal Majesty. When the Governor General, or Queen, arrives to the Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill, the Speaker of the Senate asks the Usher of the Black Rod, the senior parliamentary protocol officer and the personal attendant of the Queen as well as her messenger when she is in Parliament, to summon the Members of the House of Commons to hear the Throne Speech, which is sometimes called the King or Queen's Speech. As is tradition, when the Usher of the Black Rod arrives at the door of the House of Commons from the Senate, MPs slam the door in her face, an act to symbolize the independence of the elected members from Her Majesty and the appointed members of the upper chamber. The Usher then knocks three times on the main door with the base of the Black Rod and, although he is ceremonially challenged by the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons, he is granted approval by the Speaker of the House to enter. He then informs the Speaker of the House that members of the House of Commons are requested in the Senate Chamber. The Sergeant-at-Arms then leads a procession of elected members to the Senate Chamber where the Governor General or Queen is waiting. Once the Speech from the Throne has been read, the Usher leads the members back to the House of Commons. The Speech from the Throne is always read in the Senate.

Once the Speech from the Throne has been read, both the Senate and the House of Commons introduce "pro forma" bills (Bill S-1 in the Senate and C-1 in the Commons) to accept or reject the Throne Speech. Such protocol demonstrates their independence from the Crown and shows they are not simply following the wishes of Her Majesty. The Prime Minister usually introduces a motion to consider the Throne Speech either, later on the day it is delivered in the Senate, or at the next sitting of the House of Commons. As important to the Parliamentary process as the Speech is, the Reply to the Address and the debate that follow are equally important. The traditions around the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne has evolved since 1867, but since the early 1950s, the first day of debate is known as "Leaders' Day". It is the tradition that the Leader of the Opposition speaks first and moves an amendment to the main motion, often offering criticism of the governing party. The Prime Minister follows and his speech is then followed by that of the leader of the second largest party in opposition. Other parties which have official status in the House of Commons traditionally participate as well.

The chapters that follow in this book focus on those Throne Speeches and the Prime Ministers' Leaders' Day speeches. The Speech from the Throne and the Leaders' Day speeches are much more than ceremonial moments, steeped in history, tradition, and pomp and ceremony. They address the issues, priorities, and policies of the Government of

Canada and provide to Parliamentarians and to the Canadian people, more generally, the policies the Government intends to pursue and the laws it plans to table in the coming sitting of Parliament. The speeches are often lengthy, something acrimonious, and the Prime Minister normally attempts to situate the Government's political objectives within the economic, social, cultural and political challenges that the country may be facing at the time. It is through speeches such as those that Prime Ministers discursively define and shape Canada by articulating a set of policies and a vision that works to strengthen, shape and even reconstruct the national identity and change the national narrative. Speeches can be nearly as important – some might contend more important – than policies and the government's legislative agenda in constructing a national identity. Prime Ministers have often used rhetoric and speech as one means of encouraging citizens to adjust the nation and its identity to meet the challenges of a changing and complex world. In the view of some, to say something often enough is to make many believe it has been done and is the new reality.

The chapters in this book were written by senior undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Regina in the fall of 2020 who were enrolled in my History 403/History 803, a hybrid course on the Political History of Canada. The whole of 2020 was an uncertain time, of course, perhaps unparalleled in the life of many universities and certainly in the life of the students enrolled in those courses, when the Covid-19 pandemic created havoc for everyone. The University of Regina had resorted to remote learning for the fall semester and we all missed terribly the wonderful experience and intellectual engagement and stimulation of the small seminar room that remains, perhaps, the most intellectually engaging of any in a student's university career. But this was no ordinary class. Although we met for three hours each week by ZOOM, the discussion was as good as any I had ever experienced. Our focus was on Canada's Prime Ministers since the start of the Second World War and our primary goal was to think about the vision they held for Canada. We read widely, especially from history and political science texts, wrote short papers about what we had read, delved into primary documents, and then the students presented their preliminary findings to each other. Finally, they submitted the work that you will read here. We even had a visit from a former Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, who zoomed into the class in mid-October.

The students, all extremely engaged, articulate, and tremendously talented had ideas I soon realized should not end with research papers presented to me to be graded and then perhaps gather dust in their personal archives or simply disappear into some virtual and inaccessible realm. Each of them developed interesting perspectives on Canada's Prime Ministers and they articulated ideas that I believed should be shared with others. The result is this Open Press Book. The book itself would not have been possible without the able and enthusiastic assistance of Isaac Mulolani, an Instructional Designer in the Flexible Learning Centre at the University of Regina, who offered sage advice at the beginning of the process and shepherded us through the technical process to the release of this electronic book.

It is the students whose hard work and intellectual gifts that make this book possible, however. When I asked them midway through the term if they were interested in making a book from their research essays, to a person they were enthusiastic. Theirs may well be the first book to emerge from an undergraduate and graduate seminar in the Department of History at the University of Regina, and it has been a real delight for me as their professor to be a part of their project. I encourage others to consider such publications with their students. It is because of students like those I encountered in my classes this year – and especially those that attended my History 404/803 class, and in an uncertain and troubled world, besieged with Covid – that I continue to enjoy engaging with bright young women and men at our university each semester. I only hope that I have introduced them to the wonderful world of discovery, research, history, and publishing and that all of those pursuits will be a passion they may pursue, regardless of the road they choose once they have graduated.

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I. William Lyon Mackenzie King's Vision for Canada

BRADY DEAN

Introduction

Being Prime Minister is not easy. Those who run for and achieve the position are responsible for every action that Canada takes as well as every success and failure Canada experiences during their tenure. While the democratic system divides the power and responsibility of government and statecraft among many people and institutions, the Prime Minister likely has the most important role: to chart a course for an often divided and fractious Canada. "What kind of country is Canada to be?" is a question that likely exists in the mind of each Prime Minister on his or her first day in office and perhaps is present there until their last day in the role. Fortunately for scholars of political history, Prime Ministers propose an answer to that question very frequently during their tenure, and two of the most helpful parliamentary instruments to find their proposed answers are their Speeches from the Throne and their Leaders' Day Addresses.

Mackenzie King, Canada's longest serving Prime Minister, had much practice writing and delivering such speeches and addresses. Often perceived as unable or unwilling to take strong stances on any given issue, historians often view Mackenzie King with ambivalence.¹ In many cases, the views of historians are valid and defensible; one only needs to examine Mackenzie King's handling of conscription for evidence of political indecisiveness.² However, this criticism cannot be launched against his Speeches from the Throne and Leaders' Day Addresses. These speeches and addresses provided a clear vision of the Canada that Mackenzie King believed must come to fruition. This essay will examine his Speeches from the Throne and Leaders' Day Addresses and demonstrate that he provided a clear, firm, and unwavering vision for Canada that centered on the country being a cooperative, supportive, and nationally united country. This essay, more specifically, focuses on years from 1936 to 1942, a period which is an interesting period since the timeframe encompasses the years leading up to and including the early years of World War II. As such, the vision for Canada that Mackenzie King presented before the war's onset is given a trial by fire as the fight against Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany entered a dangerous phase. The period also provides an opportunity to investigate how Mackenzie King adjusted his vision from depression-era Canada to a period of mobilization for and participation in war. This paper argues that he does not make many adjustments. In fact, his vision only became further focused.



Right Honourable W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada from 1921 to 1930 and from 1935 to 1948.

This chapter is based on a methodology that relies on an empirical analysis of Throne Speeches and Leaders' Day Addresses by King. Through an engagement with these speeches and addresses, one is afforded a direct view of how Mackenzie King envisioned a Canada with him as Prime Minister and how he articulated that vision. Further, using both sources allows an analysis of how Mackenzie King described his vision to Canadians as well as how he defended it in the face of opposition. When looked at together, the Throne Speeches and Leaders' Day addresses provide a comprehensive overview of Mackenzie King's vision for Canada. This essay also attempts to understand Canada's national identity. National identity is a difficult concept for any nation to construct, and Canada's complicated history of bringing together several diverse ethnic communities and geographical regions only compounds this difficulty. To oversimplify the history, Indigenous people existed in what is now known as Canada long before the arrival of Europeans. France first established a colony on the North American continent in the 16th century.

Later, Britain followed and eventually won control of much of North America in the Seven Year's War in 1763. When Canada finally became a dominion and looked to expand both in size and population, it extended its control over a large area and although it invited many different races to join the nation-building endeavour, it also left out and marginalized many others as it struggled to populate the land. The result was a massive country, with many different regions, filled with people from, quite literally, all over the world. While the diversity was a beautiful creation, it also proved challenging for its political leaders. It is nearly impossible to construct a national identity that encompasses *all* of Canada's history, regions, and demography. Often, the question of Canadian national identity is contentious and has the potential to create huge schisms in the Canadian polity. Students of Canadian history can describe many tense events in Canadian history that can be connected to issues of national unity: Japanese internment, the flag debate, the conscription crisis in the First World War, and the FLQ crisis stand out. The challenge of Canadian national identity was so pervasive that it had to be present in the decision-making process of every Prime Minister and maintaining national

unity has always been a priority. Unfortunately, national identity would forever be a “moving target” for Prime Ministers. As explained by Raymond Blake: “Ideas and policies that become national identity [...] are subject to ever-changing contexts in the search for national well-being.”³ Mackenzie King knew this well and was petrified of making any decision that would threaten Canadian unity. This context is crucial to understanding the task that confronted Mackenzie King when he, through his Speeches from the Throne and Leaders Day addresses, explained his vision for Canada.

Before the War: Canada as Cooperator

When the 18th Parliament of Canada opened in February 1936, the nation was still very much in the grips of the Great Depression. Unemployment, while finally showing signs of improvement, was still of grave concern. Certainly, Canadians were alarmed with the failure of their governments to reduce the number of able-bodied workers receiving relief payments. It was against such a grim backdrop that Mackenzie King, through his Speech from the Throne, staked out his position on international trade and its importance as a tool for Canada to cooperate with the world. Touting the new Canada-United States trade agreement that had been recently reached as well as the continuing normalization of trade with Japan, King’s words left no question of what he thought of trade, noting that the signed agreement and the normalization of relations with Japan “will contribute to the reversal of the trend toward extreme economic nationalism, which has been undermining standards of living and embittering relations between countries all over the world.”⁴ King clearly – and forcefully – positioned international trade as an instrument not only of promoting peace and prosperity but also of challenging growing economic nationalism as a barrier to economic recovery in Canada and around the world. Being a shrewd politician, King was careful to paint the opposition leader at the time, Conservative R.B. Bennett, as anti-trade and an economic nationalist during his Leaders’ Day Address on 10 and 11 February 1936. While Bennett claimed that the trade agreement with the United States was negotiated too hastily, King took issue with the fact that Bennett, who was Prime Minister from 1930-1935, made no real effort to strike such a trade deal during his time in power. In pointing this out, King branded Bennett as a proponent of economic nationalism that King believed only created tensions between nations and inhibited peace.

In King’s vision, Canada was a trading nation and trade was essential for Canadian prosperity. King believed that the Canada of 1930-1935 – the Canada that he suggested employed economic nationalism under Prime Minister Bennett – was un-Canadian and he wanted to reassure Canadians that that construction of Canada was no more under his Liberal government. The Canada that King envisioned as he spoke in 1936 was one that believed in trade with other nations. He also states that, given the strong majority the Liberal government held in the 18th parliament, as well as their resounding successes in three by-elections that took place after the commencement of the last general election, Canadians, too, agreed that a global outlook was the way forward.⁵ In the Speeches from the Throne in January of both 1937 and 1938, King took each opportunity to prove that he was correct about the power and efficacy of international trade. Canada enjoyed a “marked increase” in trade and commerce over those years which improved its economic position internationally as well as provided a “continuance of recovery” in domestic finances, which remained hindered by the impacts of the Great Depression.⁶ It was also during these very same years that the situation in Europe worsened with Hitler’s violations of the Treaty of Versailles compounding the problems. King acknowledged these tensions and once again reiterated that the importance of trade as an important peace-keeping tool: “The Government is convinced,” he said, “that, in seeking to co-operate with the United Kingdom and other countries in efforts to promote international trade, it is pursuing one of the most effective means of ensuring economic security and progress in Canada, and the betterment of conditions in the other parts of the world.”⁷



Debate in the House of Commons, 1938.

In analyzing King's words above, two key points emerge that help one understand the vision that Mackenzie King had for Canada during the period from 1935 to 1939. Firstly, that international trade was key to peace in the world and Canada must contribute to peace by contributing to international trade rather than pursuing a protectionist and isolationist agenda as Bennett had. Secondly, international trade, he asserted, was good for Canada as much as it was for the world. By speaking of these two points so frequently throughout the years from 1935-1939 and by speaking of them usually one after the other, King carefully aligned and intertwined Canada's domestic well-being with its international well-being. By engaging the world in trade, Canada improved the world's conditions as well as its own domestic conditions. Therefore, the most logical and prosperous path for Canada and the path that King put Canada on emphasized the importance of international partnership and cooperation.

Before the War: Canada as Supporter of its Allies

Mackenzie King understood that Canada had much to offer the world and trade was just one of the ways it could help the world and itself at the same time. But he also understood the limits of Canada's ability to be a true global leader. He understood that Canada would never be able to lead in the same way that the United States or the United Kingdom was able to lead – it did not have the economic or military power or other resources that would allow it to do so. Even while understanding Canada's limitations, King believed Canada could help its allies reach their full potential. In King's vision, Canada had to play a supporting – but important role, nonetheless.

At the beginning of 1939, war was all but certain in Europe and it was time for all nations, including Canada, to prepare for that eventuality. That said, King believed that the work of supporting the maintenance of peace must continue and he said as much during his Leaders' Day Address that year which, primarily, was a response to the new

opposition leader, Robert Manion's address. After expounding on the success of the Liberal government in achieving a trade agreement with the United States in 1935, and the positive impacts of that trade agreement for Canadians, King explained that the United Kingdom and the United States were interested in striking a trade deal between themselves and that Canada supported such an agreement. In fact, he would help usher it along. King saw Canada as a lynch pin between those two nations and, in fact, King was willing to adjust Canada's agreements both with the United States and the United Kingdom as a way of facilitating a trade agreement between the United States and United Kingdom.⁸

King took much personal credit for Canada's generosity in adjusting its deals with the United States and United Kingdom as a way of ensuring that those two countries struck up their own deals. It was, however, an indication of King's vision for Canada. While noting that a small cost was associated with adjusting Canada's agreements with the economic interests of those two countries, those adjustments would pay dividends, as Canada's role in the international community would be further solidified. Not only had Canada improved its own economic position by brokering trade deals with other like-minded nations, it also facilitated the trade deals of its allied nations and, in doing so, "has helped to make one of the most substantial contributions towards improving world conditions that has been made in this last decade."⁹ Clearly, King envisioned a Canada that was a cooperator and facilitator on the world stage – it was open for trade with other nations and encouraged other nations to do the same.

Before the War: National Unity

The vision of Canada as player on the world stage had the potential to come with a domestic political cost. For any prime minister to become too close with other countries, especially with the United States in Canada's case, could cause strife within the various cultural groups that existed in Canada. For example, historically, many French-speaking Canadians were frequently concerned with Canada becoming too close with Great Britain, and many Canadians, more generally, have been wary of becoming intertwined with – or pulled into the orbit – of the United States. Such rhetoric and perceptions were not lost on Mackenzie King and those views were likely front of mind in any decision that he would make for the country as a means of preserving national unity. Such thinking is evident in his Speeches from the Throne and his Leaders' Day addresses prior to the war; King manifested such ideas by sprinkling messages throughout his speeches about where Canada's allegiances truly lay. King was particularly acutely aware, especially for English-speaking Canada, of the necessity of reminding Canadians that Canada was an important member of the British Commonwealth. For him, mentions of the Crown and Canada's relationship to it acted as a touchstone to recalibrate Canada's position in the world and was used to reassure Canadians that Canada was not straying too far from its roots. King mentioned the Crown many times in the period before the war. Generally, those sentiments of the Crown and of Canada's relationship to it came at the beginning of the Speeches from the Throne, especially during the period prior to the war. For example, the Speech from the Throne of February 1936 began with condolences towards the late King George V.¹⁰

The next year's speech opened with the business of King George VI's upcoming coronation and Canada both expressing its loyalty to the King and planning for Canadian representation at the coronation.¹¹ The theme continued the following year when the Speech from the Throne begins by discussing the coronation ceremonies and the reaffirmation of the "relationship between the Sovereign and his peoples in the several Dominions [...]."¹² Placing discussion of the Crown at the forefront of the Speeches from the Throne put the relationship to the Crown at the forefront of Canadian minds, a deliberate choice by Mackenzie King who always positioned Canada as a member of the Commonwealth first and foremost. Such a tactic ensured that Canada's expanding its place in the world through cooperation and support with, and for other nations, would not allow Canada to forget its historical origins, which could be cause for a strain on national unity. Mackenzie King's commitment to the Crown can also be found in his Leaders' Day Addresses, although it is in these somewhat more wide-ranging addresses that Mackenzie King carefully qualified Canada's relationship to the Crown. To King, while the relationship to the Crown was extremely important, so too was national autonomy. While these two values may seem competing – and they were in some respects – King was careful to hold them both at once in harmony. Perhaps the clearest indication of this is a quotation by King in his Leaders' Day address of 1937 where he states

that “there is the importance of laying emphasis upon national autonomy and, on the other hand, the equal importance of laying emphasis upon imperial unity.”¹³ He continues to qualify his vision for Canada as both Commonwealth member and autonomous agent by saying, “there are times when it is necessary to emphasized strongly the position of our national autonomy; there are other times when it is equally desirable that the need of unity between all parts of the British Empire should be strongly stressed.”¹⁴ King’s vision of Canada as committed member of the Commonwealth and autonomous agent is even further intertwined and solidified when, during his Leaders’ Day Address during the special war session of 8 September 1939, King made it very clear that Canada must be involved in the war. He once again emphasized Canada’s historical roots as a British dominion and even utilized those roots in his rhetoric, stating that Canada had to join the side of the Allies because, after all, “where did our liberties and freedoms come from?”¹⁵ Clearly, the Canada that Mackenzie King envisioned was one that was simultaneously committed to its historical ancestors but also one which made its own decisions as a nation.

When war did eventually come, however, would King’s vision for Canada change or remain the same?

During the War: Cooperator

Mackenzie King could make any grand claim of Canada as a cooperator in peace time. In fact, the growing tension in Europe prior to 1939 only strengthened King’s claims that Canada should be a partner and facilitator on the world stage as a means of avoiding war. However, war proved to be unavoidable and King had increased Canadian military expenditure in the few years before 1939. Would the concepts that King espoused during peace time remain and continue to be pursued during war time? The answer to this question is yes, and while King’s peace time vision for Canada played an important role of keeping the world peace, the outbreak of war only served to strengthen his resolve. Canada was a partner to its traditional allies in the Commonwealth and to the US before the war to try and he even attempted to avert a conflict, but once the war began, Canada not only remained a partner but also increased its effort to wage the war against Nazi Germany to ensure that good prevailed in the battle and overcame the evil that he believed had engulfed the globe.

Early during World War II, the onslaught of Nazi Germany was frightening for King as the immediate and crushing losses grew for Allied nations. These developments would occupy most of King’s Speeches from the Throne for the early years of the war. He used these advancements of the Nazi forces in Europe to remind Canadians that Canada will be an unrelenting and unflinching partner in the war effort, stating, “These tragic events have but served to intensify our determination to share in the war effort of the allied powers to the utmost of our strength.”¹⁶ King’s use of the phrase, “utmost of our strength,” is telling, and it was a clear signal to Canadians that Canada would be a partner in the war effort to the extent possible to ensure victory in Europe as Canada had done in the fight for peace during the First World War. While he stopped short of uttering the phrase “total war” at this point, King seems to have been preparing Canadians for that level of commitment. The early years of the war also allowed King to align Canada’s interest with that of those nations from which many Canadians had come and were then resisting German aggression: Britain and France. “The constant consultation and complete co-operation maintained with the government of the United Kingdom and France [...]”¹⁷

Clearly, King wanted Canadians to agree that Canada had to cooperate to its fullest extent on the side of good in the battle of good versus evil to ensure the victory and that Canada find itself, at the end of war, “[...] standing, united at the side of Britain and of France.”¹⁸ Unfortunately, King’s statement did not age well. In June of 1940, France capitulated to Nazi Germany. This did not shake King’s vision for Canada’s role in the war effort; it only shifted its focus. While the United States was not involved in the war until 1941, France’s capitulation meant that the United States was now a key ally in the fight against Germany. King reminded the Canadian people of this while also reinforcing Canada’s important role in the Allied war effort: “In the face of the common peril there has arisen a closer association and an increasing measure of co-operation between the United States of America and the nations of the British Commonwealth.”¹⁹ King’s mention of the United States alongside the Commonwealth was a harbinger of the kind of cooperation that would follow

the war years. In short, Canada was seemingly ready to cooperate with any nation fighting on the side of good versus evil and he was preparing the Canadian people to cooperate fully with its two most important Allies at the time: the United Kingdom and the United States of America. For King, Canada's security had to be ensured.

During the War: Supporter

King left Canadians with no doubt that Canada would be a key member of the Allied fight against Nazi aggression. But, as has been discussed above, Canada could not be a true global leader in this fight; it simply did not have the power or resources to do so. Its primary role would be that of supporting the larger nations and front-line fighters of the war, and it is within the Speeches from the Throne and Leaders' Day addresses that King explains the importance of this supporting role. In fact, King brands the level of Canada's support with a new name: total war.²⁰ Throughout the war, King frequently expounded on the importance of Canada fully contributing to the war effort. Factories would be retrofitted to create war materials, Canada would train war pilots on its soil, and create many new initiatives to fight the good fight. In King's words, Canada was to "[contribute] to Britain vast quantities of munitions, foodstuffs, and supplies."²¹ King's Leaders' Day addresses during the war years primarily revolved around quantifying and defending the degree to which Canada was supporting the war effort. More specifically, King had to defend his administration's war policies by showing that no expense was being spared in the fight against Nazi aggression. In his January 1942 Leaders' Day address, for instance, King defended his government's training of British pilots as being the best use of its resources so that Britain can "strike back against the aggressor."²² Canada also had a supporter role as lynchpin between the United States and the United Kingdom, much as it had prior to the outbreak of war.²³ Where Canada acted as a supporter of trade between like-minded nations before the war, it became a supporter of United States and United Kingdom relations during the war as well. Specifically, King helped to facilitate getting the United States' resources into the hands of the United Kingdom in the fight against Germany, even if isolationists within the United States were keeping their country out of the war. He spoke of this role at length in his November 1940 Leaders' Day address wherein he thanked the United States for their help in the war effort, whether that be through planes, tanks, materiel, and the like as well as Canada's part in securing such help: "joint action between the United States and Canada was recognized also as necessary to their common security [...] what followed constitutes the most significant development in international affairs since our parliament adjournment in August. Of ultimate importance, it far surpasses the formation of the [T]riple [A]xis."²⁴ The impact of Canada's support of the war effort through fostering and nurturing joint action with the United States is not undersold by King. History would later prove that he was correct in these grandiose claims as support from the "neutral" United States helped stave off defeat of the United Kingdom by Nazi Germany. Not only was Canada in a total war footing and supporting the war effort through materiel at every junction, but it was also ensuring that the United States supported the war effort too. This was, it might be argued, Canada's true contribution as an important partner in the Allied war effort.



Right Honourable Mackenzie King, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Right Honourable Winston Churchill at the Quebec Conference, August 1943.

During the War: National Unity

While Canada was being pushed to its limits and fully engaged in what Mackenzie King labelled as total war, the cracks in national unity which showed at the best of times had the potential to be exacerbated. As such, King had to portray Canada to Canadians and internationally as united through World War II, and his Leaders' Day Addresses during the war years, therefore, focused much on national unity. Firstly, King made it clear that Canada must not resort to partisan infighting and must remain united. That rhetoric was certainly one way of pre-emptively hamstringing political opponents during the war, such as opposition leader Richard Hanson in the early years of the conflict and Gordon Graydon in the later years, but it also shows King's desire for a united country with him at the helm. He argued that his government during the war was exactly what the people wanted, and he claimed to have the strong mandate of the Canadian people, citing his strong 1940 election victory as evidence.²⁵ To King, Canadians want him in Ottawa leading the nation and they were united behind him. His only goal – as it related to national unity during the war years – was to assert that Canada was, indeed, united and the only threat to that unity was the leaders across the aisle. This rhetoric continued when King frequently criticized the opposition leaders for playing politics during such a time when what the nation required was strong unity: “[the war] needs and will need the utmost vigour and whole-hearted assistance on

the part of each and every one of us.”²⁶ This is not to say that Canada was operating completely independent of Great Britain. King deflects Richard Hanson’s attempts to paint him as not being loyal enough to the Crown by saying “[I] have the strongest admiration for Britain” and he chastised Hanson for trying to create division by saying: “I see no reason for drawing a line between our respective loyalties.”²⁷ Thus, by dismissing these criticisms and, in fact, criticizing Hanson for launching such divisive language, King’s position on national unity put forward in his speeches during the war was evident: Canada was united, and any criticism of his strongly-elected national government only actually serve to foment disunity. Perhaps the best illustration of King’s vision of the united Canada during the war can be found in an already-referenced statement he made in May of 1940, while the war was not going well for the Allies: “the end of the war will find the people of Canada, where the beginning of the war found us; standing, united at the side of Britain and of France.”²⁸

Evoking a victory achieved in partnership with those nations from which Canada’s two major cultural and ethnic groups descended was King’s most powerful statement to reinforce national unity. So, too, was his strategy on conscription. In the early years of the war, it quickly became clear that even more soldiers would be needed than already provided and were later volunteering. This need led to a national discussion of conscription and whether it would be necessary to enact to sustain Canada’s war effort. King, extremely wary of the impact on national unity that conscription would have given the divisions it caused in 1917, he delayed as long as possible to avoid straining national unity and he initially instituted only half-measures to placate the advocates of conscription. In 1940, King introduced conscription but only for the purposes of defending Canada and not for sending soldiers overseas. In 1942, a plebiscite was held to release the Canadian government from its promise of not sending those conscripted men overseas. In 1944, King reluctantly sent men overseas. French Canada showed its dismay with this decision and national unity was strained. Despite this, this strain was eventually lifted when, in 1945, the war came to an end. A relieved King was able to maintain national unity while fulfilling Canada’s war effort, perhaps one of the most difficult issues of his tenure as Prime Minister.²⁹

Conclusion

The reputation Mackenzie King has today – that of equivocating and indecisiveness – certainly did not come from the speeches examined in this paper. These speeches show a clear vision of Canada, both before and during the war. What is also interesting is the fact that the war, likely Canada’s greatest test it had had to that date, had no real effect on King’s vision of Canada. In fact, he may have doubled down on that vision during the war. The Canada that King described prior to the Second World War came to fruition at the onset of the war and he remained the course throughout the conflict. One may even speculate that King prepared Canada for its ultimate test by charting his vision for Canada prior to the war and then staying the course once fighting began. The result was an impressive showing in the war and the emergence of a stronger, more united Canada that understood the impact it could have on the world with a visionary leader like Mackenzie King at the helm.

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Endnotes

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2. Diefenbaker's Canada: A Vision for Human Rights and Multiculturalism in the Speeches from the Throne

REBECCA MORRIS-HURL

Introduction

Saskatchewan's John G. Diefenbaker became Canada's thirteenth Prime Minister with a Progressive Conservative minority government in June 1957, ending twenty-two consecutive years of Liberal leadership in Canada. The establishment was shocked. In the snap election called nine months later, in March, 1958, Diefenbaker won an unprecedented 53.6 percent of the popular vote and the largest percentage majority in the House of Commons to date with 208 of 265 seats.¹ Throughout the federal campaign races of 1957 and the later campaign in 1958, Diefenbaker capitalized on his prairie roots to portray himself as a champion of the average Canadian willing to stand up to the Liberal "Ivory Tower Boys" who, he insisted, had grown arrogant and no longer served the best interests of Canadian citizens. His campaign touted a 'New National Policy,' and it served as a rallying cry to citizens across the country. Dedicated to delivering on his campaign rhetoric, Diefenbaker's Speeches from the Throne solidified his vision for 'One Canada' outlining the priorities of his Conservative Party to create a modern nation and a prosperous future through membership in the Commonwealth, the development of the richness of Canada's resources, and the promotion of an united, un-hyphenated citizenry. This chapter will focus on a selection of Diefenbaker's Speeches from the Throne and his subsequent Leaders' Day replies to provide a lens into Diefenbaker's vision for an inclusive Canada, recognized internationally as a champion for human rights.

Queen Elizabeth II sitting on the throne while reading the speech from the throne at the opening of Canada's 23rd Parliament on 14 October 1957. Sitting beside the Queen is John G. Diefenbaker who was Prime Minister of Canada at the time.

Queen Elizabeth II reads the Speech from the Throne at the opening of Canada's 23rd Parliament, 14 October 1957. On her right is John G. Diefenbaker, Prime Minister of Canada.

The Speech from the Throne opens each new session of Parliament and is carefully crafted by the Prime Minister's Office and delivered by the Governor General as Canada's Head of State and the representative of the Crown. The speech outlines the goals and priorities of the government for the session and speaks to the legislation and particular policies the government intends to pursue to achieve these goals. Diefenbaker had the opportunity to pen a total of seven Throne Speeches as prime minister of Canada. For the purposes of this analysis, the speeches that bookend his six year tenure – the very first speech, delivered by Queen Elizabeth II, in October 1957, his second Throne Speech delivered just eight months later in May 1958, and his very last Throne Speech, delivered in September 1962.² These speeches provide considerable insight into the vision of the populist Prime Minister and demonstrate his commitment to human rights and multiculturalism and his belief in the promise of Canada. Analysis of these speeches will also evaluate if Diefenbaker's priorities shifted throughout his time as Prime Minister and, therefore, determine if his rhetoric was more than empty hyperbole.

The Making of a Prairie Populist

Since Confederation in 1867, those who have governed Canada have worked to realize a cohesive national identity. Founded on a compromise between largely French-speaking Catholic and English-speaking Protestant values, Canada's foundational national narrative purposely excluded portions of citizens who populated the vast land. It was Diefenbaker's personal experience with life on the margins of the 'two founding nations' narrative that compelled him to advocate for a more inclusive Canada with protected rights for its citizens. His political journey began in 1920, when he joined the village council in Wakaw, Saskatchewan, but it would be a long and often disappointing road to the House of Commons. He did not succeed in any of federal elections where he was often a candidate until 1940, and then he served as a Tory backbencher for sixteen years before he was finally successful in becoming the party leader.

Before this chapter explores the language of Diefenbaker's Speeches from the Throne and his Leaders' Day replies, it is necessary to consider, even if briefly, an overview of the Canadian political and social climate that set the stage for Diefenbaker's success in the election of 1957.³ Timing is everything, especially in politics, and this was most certainly true for John Diefenbaker. If he would have won any of the multitude of elections he had contested between 1925, when he first ran for federal office, and 1956, when he became the leader of the Progressive Conservative party, he might not have found his way to the office of the Prime Minister, his ultimate ambition since his humble childhood in Saskatchewan.

As Canada, still a relatively young country in the early 1950s, entered the modern era following the Second World War, there was a "proliferation of writing on the philosophies and principles of Liberalism and Conservatism in Canada" which "reveals the extent to which political thinkers and politicians believed they were in the midst of a period of ideological flux."⁴ Beginning in the 1950s, the Conservative narrative was re-energized, due in part to the new writing of Canadian history, specifically, the publication of Donald G. Creighton's biography of Sir John A. Macdonald, *The Young Politician*, and *The Old Chieftain*, which "defined the conservative view of Canada to a whole generation."⁵ Diefenbaker realized that Canadians, who were no longer British citizens after the passage of the *Canadian Citizenship Act*, 1947 and under threat of cultural and economic absorption into the fast emerging world superpower the United States, were looking for a home grown narrative with which to identify. Canada was changing and Diefenbaker's narrative attracted many, specifically Western Canadians but others, too, yearning for a new, modern, inclusive national identity.

In the prosperous years following the Second World War, Canadians did not think of Macdonald as an "architect of genocide" as some do in 2020. Therefore, there was no irony for the public that Diefenbaker harkened to the legacy of Macdonald while espousing a vision and rhetoric for an inclusive Canada which included "unhyphenated Canadians" of varying ethnicities and religions. A cursory glance at the legislation proposed by each federal leader highlights this stark contrast in defining a "Canadian". Macdonald introduced the *Electoral Franchise Act* and *Chinese Immigration Act* in 1885 in an effort to ensure "...that the new polity of Canada was to be for European men who owned property".⁶ By contrast, Diefenbaker assigned his Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (and Indian Affairs), Ellen Fairclough, the first female cabinet minister in the history of Canada's parliament, to introduce regulations that would eliminate racial discrimination from Canada's Immigration legislation.

Diefenbaker biographer, Peter C. Newman, remarked at the time that in the post-World War II era of "the easy materialism of the lush Fifties, many Canadians were groping for some deeper national purpose. John Diefenbaker successfully drew upon this widespread frustration to create a shared vision of a more vigorous and more noble future."⁷ The prairie grown populist capitalized on any opportunity to launch into a targeted speech to appeal to his audience. Cara Spittal, in her Ph.D thesis "The Diefenbaker Moment" highlights Diefenbaker's experience as a successful defence lawyer in which he selected high profile cases where he could represent the underdog. "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."⁸ In contrast to the Liberal party of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, Diefenbaker clearly understood the importance of rhetoric and speeches, and embraced every opportunity to engage with citizens.

In December 1956, Diefenbaker became the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party after poor health lead

to the resignation of his predecessor, George Drew. Drew had played a significant role in the Pipeline Debate of 1956 and Diefenbaker claimed this victory as his.⁹ The pipeline debate represents a watershed moment for the long reigning Liberal party because in an effort to begin construction on the pipeline that would carry natural gas from Alberta to Montreal by June of 1956, the Liberal party implemented a time limit on debate for the bill introduced to Parliament. The *Northern Ontario Pipe Line Crown Corporation Act*, 1956 proposed the creation of a Crown Corporation that would construct the problematic portion of the pipeline through the Canadian Shield.¹⁰ The Crown Corporation was necessary to demonstrate Canadian ownership as Canadians were becoming more aware of the extent to which the country's economy was owned and controlled by foreign, specifically American companies.¹¹ Diefenbaker seized the opportunity, citing Liberal arrogance by highlighting the party's disregard for Parliamentary institutions. The Pipeline Debate played a significant role in the defeat of the Liberal party in 1957, giving Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives a minority government.

Speeches from the Throne

Diefenbaker's inaugural Throne Speech, read on October 14, 1957, holds a significant space in Canadian history as it marked the first time the Speech was delivered by the sitting Monarch. It also marked the new Queen, Elizabeth II's, first North American tour upon her succession to the British Throne. Diefenbaker ensured the event was well publicized with CBC television cameras allowed in the House of Commons and in the Senate for the first time, to broadcast the Queen reading Diefenbaker's vision to a national audience. The sense of excitement was further heightened by a temporary power failure caused by the lighting required for the broadcast. In addition to raising the temperature of the room to thirty-three degrees Celsius, the lights blew the breakers of the House of Commons and the matter was only resolved with minutes to spare.¹² The occasion also marked Prince Edward Island's Heath MacQuarrie's first throne speech; he would go on to serve twenty-two years as a member of Parliament and fifteen as a senator, but he noted that the 1957 Speech from the Throne was the most memorable in the country's history. The Throne Speech of 1957 held special reverence for him because it contained "...a cornucopia of beneficial things for the regions and people of Canada. Seniors would have [their] pensions increased, success to them made easier. The blind, disabled persons and the war veterans were to be assisted and hard-pressed farmers saw relief coming their way. New assistance and attention for the Atlantic region heartened the people of the East."¹³ Diefenbaker had risen to the office of Canada's Prime Minister with promises to help the common people of Canada and his inaugural Speech from the Throne demonstrated his commitment to the people who had helped to get him there.



John G. Diefenbaker, MP, speaking in the House of Commons.

However, it was not only domestic issues that were given priority in the 1957 Speech. On the international front, the Speech highlighted the importance of the Commonwealth as the means to which Diefenbaker would bolster Canada's economy. The Speech described the Commonwealth as a "bright constellation" that "illuminates our times" through "the overcast of international affairs."¹⁴ The Commonwealth was the means through which Canada would access global markets, thereby lessening its reliance on the United States. The Commonwealth would continue to be an important aspect of Diefenbaker's vision for Canada. As Spittal writes,

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.¹⁵

Diefenbaker's Leaders' Day reply on October 16, 1957, in contrast to the formal and poetic language of the Throne Speech, was adversarial. After his many years as a defence lawyer and lengthy period as a backbencher, Diefenbaker was ready to take the spotlight and play hero to the Liberal party's villain. He spoke of the problems of average Canadian people, of turkeys and skim milk and of coal and droughts, all the while pointing to the indifference of the Liberal government to the struggles of Canadian citizens. In speaking of International matters and the disarmament program offered by the American President to the U.S.S.R., Diefenbaker commented that Canada shared "...joint purposes with the United States on this continent" that "are peaceful and not aggressive."¹⁶ The decision, whether Canada would acquire nuclear weapons as well as his relationship with a new President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, would later have a great impact on Diefenbaker and his popularity. The Defence Crisis of 1962 and 1963 between the US and Cuba would also become one of the most tumultuous periods in Canadian and American relations. It would demonstrate, as George Grant contends, that Diefenbaker was serious in his conviction for a determined Canadian nationalism.¹⁷ "The Defence Crisis," Grant wrote, "illustrated how profoundly Diefenbaker's Canadianism was bound up with the British connection. Since 1914, Britain had ceased to be a great power. Both [Howard] Green [the minister of defence] and Diefenbaker continued to accept as real, however, the meaning of Canada's membership in the British Commonwealth."¹⁸ This belief would prove to be significant in the fall of Diefenbaker's government.

Diefenbaker's second Throne Speech followed an unprecedented campaign which resulted in the largest majority government and the largest percentage of the popular vote in Canadian history. The Speech, delivered on 12 May 1958, by Governor General Georges Vanier, announced what Diefenbaker would consider his greatest achievement. "My Government will propose to you the enactment of a Bill of Rights to safeguard the rights of all persons in Canada in respect of all subjects within the jurisdiction of Parliament."¹⁹ On Dominion Day, 1960, the Canadian Bill of Rights was introduced to Parliament and passed on August 10, 1960. As Peter C. Newman noted in a *Maclean's* magazine article published a year later, "To Prime Minister Diefenbaker himself, the passage of the Bill of Rights was a victory in an intensely felt personal battle."²⁰ In 1961, Diefenbaker shared what the Bill of Rights meant to him:

My advocacy of a Bill of Rights was to assure Canadians, whatever their racial origins or surnames, the right of full citizenship and an end to discrimination. This was basic to my philosophy of 'One Canada, One Nation'. It was to give Canadians a new sense of national greatness and the opportunity to proudly declare it that the 1961 decennial census for the first and last time asked the question: 'Are you a Canadian?' Hundreds of thousands of Canadians answered: 'Yes,' with pride." The question was removed when the Liberal returned to office.²¹

Diefenbaker was a champion of human rights, something he began advocating for as early as 1946 when he pressed the Government of Mackenzie King to introduce a Canadian bill of rights when it enacted the Citizenship Act in 1946.

Diefenbaker's final Throne Speech, delivered on 27 September 1962 continued to advance the trajectory he had embraced in earlier Throne Speeches. Once again highlighted the significance of the Commonwealth as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In order to realize his commitment to human rights, Diefenbaker believed that Canada had to participate in the international institutions that were committed to peace and security. The Speech announced that the Conservatives would seek to take a "significant step in rounding out the concept of Confederation" and "consider a resolution to provide for the "repatriation" of the Constitution of Canada."²² The Speech also spoke of job creation as unemployment in Canada was at a dire point. It also announced measures to establish an "Indian

Claims Commission to investigate claims on the part of various tribes and bands that certain of their rights have been restricted or abrogated, and make recommendations for the equitable and final settlement of such claims.”²³ This represents a significant step forward to reconciling the efforts of Canadian governments, from the time of Macdonald, to disenfranchise Indigenous peoples from their lands. The Terms of Reference for the Commission were approved by Cabinet in October 1962; however, Diefenbaker’s Draft Bill on the matter did not make it to Parliament before his government fell in February 1963. Still, his intentions of dealing with Indigenous issues demonstrate that he brought a new approach to dealing with the marginalized peoples in Canada.

In his Leaders’ Day reply in 1962, Liberal party leader, Lester B. Pearson, chastised the Prime Minister for not recalling Parliament in the summer so that the currency crisis (a precipitous drop in the value of the Canadian dollar) could be dealt with. He referred to the Throne Speech as a “dish of Tory leftovers” with “no evidence of real change.” According to Pearson, the dire situation that Canada faced in the devaluation of the Canadian dollar was the result of “the government’s financial mismanagement, the government’s policies regarding foreign capital, and especially the government’s mishandling of the [James] Coyne [the Governor of the Bank of Canada] affair.”²⁴ This was not an over exaggeration on Pearson’s part, but rather a deft and competent assessment of the Conservative administration’s action. Mr. Pearson was in total command when he reminded Prime Minister Diefenbaker of his own words regarding the effectiveness of minority governments and urged a vote of confidence.

Following the 1962 election, Diefenbaker’s hold on power was tenuous. Diefenbaker had first been elected to the office of Prime Minister on his vision of ‘One Canada’ and an inclusive concept of ‘un-hyphenated’ Canadians. Once in power, he consciously reached out to populations that had historically been disenfranchised from politics and power in Canada through legislation and an array of social policy initiatives. Those sentiments can be best captured in his own words:

*I am the first prime minister of this country of neither altogether English or [sic] French origin. So I determined to bring about a Canadian citizenship that knew no hyphenated consideration....I’m very happy to be able to say that in the House of Commons today in my party we have members of Italian, Dutch, German, Scandinavian, Chinese and Ukrainian origin – and they are all Canadians.*²⁵

Diefenbaker’s other ‘firsts’ include the appointment of the first female Cabinet minister, the first Indigenous person as senator and the first French-Canadian Governor General. The ideas he championed throughout his prime ministership would set the foundation on which modern concepts of tolerance, gender equality and reconciliation would be solidified in Canada’s modern national identity. In the fractious 1962 Parliament, however, those accomplishments would not be sufficient to keep Diefenbaker in the Prime Minister’s Office.



The opening of Parliament in Ottawa, 12 May 1958. Prime Minister John Diefenbaker greets Governor Vincent Massey as he arrives to deliver the Speech from the Throne.

Even so, an engagement with his Throne Speeches and Leaders' Day addresses clearly demonstrate that Diefenbaker gave national attention to the concerns and realities of everyday Canadian citizens. His approach to statecraft and governing might help explain why Canadian voters gave him the largest percentage of the popular vote in Canadian history to date and why many Canadians remained loyal to him even after many in his own party deserted him. But such policies and his rhetoric of a strong, inclusive national identity was not sufficient to keep the Tories in office and Diefenbaker in the office of the Prime Minister. High unemployment, despite Diefenbaker's Throne Speech commitment of job creation, the untimely devaluation of the dollar in June of 1962, as well as the cancellation of the Avro Arrow Project and the Diefenbaker government's indecision around nuclear warheads on Canadian soil all conspired to discredit Diefenbaker in the minds of many voters. Moreover, the American government, the media and the Liberal party of Canada were all "baying for Diefenbaker's blood." Diefenbaker maintained, however, his principle that Canada was a sovereign nation and only the Canadian Government would decide, for instance, on its military commitments for possible war in Europe or itself. This insistence from Diefenbaker came after meetings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) publicly chastised Diefenbaker on its military policy, and he was having none of it. "His opponents successfully raised the cry of 'indecisiveness' ... [as] they explained his actions by saying that he was trying to have the best of [Douglas] Harkness's [Minister of Defence] and Green's positions for the low motive of political success ... His

speech at the dissolution of Parliament made clear that the one thing he would not stomach was the United States government determining Canadian defence policy.”²⁶ Diefenbaker was a nationalist to the bitter end.

Conclusion

Much has been written about John G. Diefenbaker's prolific career in politics which spanned decades and ended only with his death in 1979. He has often been referred to as a wonderful campaigner, but a terrible leader. As Peter C. Newman wrote in one of his many *Maclean's* articles about Diefenbaker, “He came to the toughest job in the country without having worked for anybody else in his life; he had never hired or fired anyone and never administered anything more complicated than a walk-up law office.”²⁷ Despite his lack of administrative skills, “Dief the Chief” contributed significantly to Canada's national identity and was unwavering in his vision for ‘One Canada’. While Diefenbaker did not alter his message greatly from the days of his early campaigns and key Parliamentary speeches compared to those of his later years in office, the ideas that had rallied the nation in 1957 and 1958 were out of touch with the realities of 1963. Through his Speeches from the Throne, Diefenbaker championed the rights and needs of everyday people, stressed the importance of the Commonwealth, and the potential of the country if its richness were developed, specifically those resources in Canada's vast northern frontier. As demonstrated by the policies he championed in his Speeches from the Throne, Diefenbaker did not change, but the times did. Yet, many of the ideas and values he vigorously promoted would come to fruition only after his death.

Endnotes

1 In the 1984 election, Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative party won 211 of a total 282 seats or 74.8% of the House of Commons. Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative party won 78.5% of the seats.

2 A video of the Queen delivering the speech (in English) can be viewed here: <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/queen-elizabeth-opens-parliament-in-1957>

3 Cara Spittal, in her Ph.D thesis “The Diefenbaker Moment” writes extensively about the various forces that aligned in order for Diefenbaker to realize his life's ambition.

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3. Lester B. Pearson's Quest for Progress and Canada's Centennial Year: Speech from the Throne and Leaders' Day Reply, 1967

JOSHUA SWITZER

Introduction

National progress, as political virtue, is an obvious choice for politicians to include in their speechmaking rhetoric. For some Prime Ministers of Canada this stands true in their Speech from the Throne and Leaders' Day Reply (also simply known as the Reply to the Speech from the Throne). In the same breath, does progress also mean that Prime Ministers merely provide lists of answers to ordinary Canadians in every single speech produced? In the Throne and Throne Reply speeches one can most definitely find examples of progress-driven language on the state of the economy, research and development, social and state relations, resource management, international intentions, party platforms, and other themes typical of any parliamentary speech. Prime Ministers also attempt to *envision* what Canada means for Canadians – in the present and for the future. The Speech from the Throne and Leaders' Day Reply from Lester Bowles Pearson, 14th Prime Minister of Canada, casts its light over some unique matters. Both Speeches traditionally emphasize the policy objectives of government. Some commentators and academics see such skillful speeches as being designed to gloss over matters with intrigue and in dressed-up language, however. Clichés pervade these speeches as well.

What is often created, though, is a pleasant and, simultaneously, serious dialogue with Canadians and this, I maintain in this chapter, was Pearson's intention in his 1967 Speech from the Throne. As much as it was an ode to the Fathers of Confederation, Pearson wanted Canadians to share their pride amongst one another by celebrating the progress of the nation of Canada. There is more to both Speeches than meets the eye, however. The Speech from the Throne in 1967 was read by Governor General Roland Michener and more importantly it conveyed Pearson's political ideals, values, and visions, evincing rhetorical prowess and sound judgement. Pearson's Throne Speech and Reply from May of 1967 showcase some rather interesting themes that typify his time in office as Prime Minister; he wrote modestly with no contrived language in these speeches, and seemed to speak directly to Canadians¹ and, if not for himself or his party, in honour of the country. But the question still begged is whether or not the Speech from the Throne and Leaders' Day Reply from Prime Minister Pearson departs as a message to Canadians as only a political promise; national and international matters are reined in by leaders when they solidify and legitimate their position abroad and garner support from the civilians of their country.

This paper's analysis will be tied together with certain threads that stitch together a larger picture: Pearson's political ideals in three themes. It must be said that many of the sections from both speeches are outside the scope of this essay; such an approach ensures a more specific, instead of a generalized, thematic direction to understanding Pearson as that moment in Canada's history. After touching on some of Pearson's political 'highlights', a narrative on the three themes will start to take shape: Pearson and Confederation as it pertained to the centennial year, Pearson and the provinces on questions surrounding the Canadian Constitution, and Pearson's inherent internationalist leanings while in office. These themes will be given due attention within the appropriate context of each in relation to the larger theme of progress that Pearson promoted.



The Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson sitting at his desk in the Parliament Building in Ottawa.

Brief Secondary Literature Overview

There is not a great deal of scholarly work that has been written analyzing Canadian Prime Ministers and their vision for Canada as outlined in the Throne and Leaders' Day speeches. As such, this essay offers a new, fresh approach to Canada's political history; such an approach is an act of continuity that narrates not just on an academic level but also on a public one; finally, it navigates through the vast terrain of Canada's political traditions. Much of the literature cited in this essay provides a context for each discussed; the Throne Speech from May 8th and Leaders' Day Reply from May 10th focus in on the primary and secondary literature themes and topics that intersect and overlap. The essay's secondary literature is supplemented by Canadian political and social history and more specialized articles on Pearson written in the last 20 years, and what he accomplished with a twice-elected minority government for five years. Among the important studies of Pearson in politics include *Pearson: The Unlikely Gladiator* edited by Norman Hillmer. A good overview of the political climate of Canada in the 1960s is provided by Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement and Gregory S. Kealey's *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*. The 'political brand' of Pearson will be supported by work from Michael Bliss's well-known *Right Honourable Men: The Descent of Canadian Politics from Macdonald to Chretien*. Other secondary sources appropriated into certain sections of the essay are also important and is mentioned – in-text or footnotes – as the paper progresses.

Approaching Lester Pearson and the Essay's Parameters

On the home front, Mike Pearson (as he was sometimes called) was a practical and pragmatic politician given to accommodation; globally he strived for mutual understanding with other world leaders.² From 1963-1968, Lester B. Pearson improved social programs, many of which are still in effect today, such as the Canadian Pension Plan, universal healthcare and national student loans. He became the first Prime Minister to visit France (1964), signed the Auto Pact (1965) with the United States of America, and appointed two Royal Commissions dealing with challenging

social and cultural issues: women's status in Canada and bilingualism and biculturalism. On the international level, today, we remember Pearson for his peacekeeping. Finding a solution to the Suez Crisis was Pearson's first most important moment on the international stage, and it defined him as he won the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for his gallant efforts. We can also contribute his international traits to his governing style, a more interesting term: middle-powermanship. Placing Pearson in each of the following boxes – capacity, concentration, creativity, coalition-building, and credibility – establishes a series of interlinking narratives about Pearson's Canada – a nation between smaller and larger countries within the arena of international activity and taking particular and reasoned positions on foreign conflict.³ Pearson was also known as a liberal internationalist and neoliberalist, but only in certain contexts. For the latter we can draw upon Michel Foucault's *gouvernementalite* (any matter 'concerning government'). Within this concept is the notion of classic liberal structures of society and economy turned on its head: refashioned as a relationship that balances social individualism and economic maturity of a nation, and its adherence to the state by supporting the basis of government decisions.⁴

Pearson's motives in the 1960s stemmed from his past experiences in the political arena. His political footing as described in this essay is rooted in "retrospective significance" – a rather objective task – which peers into a past within a past.⁵ Historians are constantly recasting historical actors and their stories reflectively. While it may be debatable, a narrative often unfolds in the retelling of history; the past is left in its place and a version of that past is put under the microscope, viewed as a production of significant events and developments which recreates the actors and their mentalities.⁶ Since this essay is a product of what emerges when one approach primary documents through the lens of empiricism and reads into the connection between political power and persuasion and how they operate within the purview of one democratic leader, there are surely going to be unavoidable overlaps that create inherent silences in the narrative in its attempt to set up a methodology when discussing politics. There are limitations in what I will say about Lester Pearson's vision of Canada viewed through the rhetoric of speech. Therefore, I have to point out that however useful it is to look at these Throne Speeches with a sense of wonder, looking back in history at how wonderfully versed and terse these Prime Ministers were in reassuring Canadians of their vision for Canada, I ask (and declare, all at once) how important this essay's analysis unearths historical actors and puts them in their proper place contemporarily – in this case, it is about actors who evaluate and envisage their country. The essay reinforces this idea, and adds to the impressive compendium of topics and chapters in this book on Prime Ministers, as scholarship in this area of history grows. The essays are useful projects for contributing to a snapshot of micro political history. I contend that the argument of this short essay is constructivist in that it values form, content and narrative in lieu of fact and truth-seeking metanarratives.⁷

The Path from Confederation to 1967

Confederation was the rock on which Canada was first conceived. The truth is, there is not one ounce of doubt Pearson would not have included the importance of Confederation in his Centennial Speeches. What primed the theme of Confederation relevant to 1967's Canada in his speeches were intertwining themes such as the capacity of the federal system, the pivotal role of establishing provincial relations, "public responsibility"⁸ and other currents of thought which brought together the idea of a tribute to the "men of many races, creeds, and tongues".⁹ Ultimately it was their "wisdom and foresight" in founding a country that was being celebrated.¹⁰ Pearson candidly acknowledged Canadians' view of Confederation from the point of view of "succeeding generations of men and women" had changed and evolved in a positive way, and that our national unity has "preserve[d] the whole".¹¹ Speaking on behalf of the nation in the Speech from the Throne, Pearson said that "the path of Confederation has been beset with great difficulties – some neutral, some inevitable and some of our own making".¹²

Pearson sowed the seeds of a promising future, however, nobly proclaiming the rightfulness of Confederation in the history of Canada that Centennial year – the idea that Canada had made it through some rocky times, but here it was, flourishing 100 years later. He referenced responsibility and opportunity within the context of how Canada had

grown from a minor to mature nation. This is not to say that the celebratory aspect of the centennial itself “did much to mask the troubled and uncertain decade”¹³. The Centennial speeches instead defined notions of nation-building from the time of Confederation. Although his Throne Speech played to the tune of economic nationalism, something Pearson was well-known for while in office, Confederation signaled the progress of Canada from 1867 through to 1967, relative to the political branding of the Pearsonian slogan for signifying nation-building. To Pearson, Confederation was personified as a beacon of progress. The Centennial was, after all, the ultimate example of how far Canada had come as a nation. In his speeches, the topic of Confederation was given ample room to extrapolate and plot out a narrative of national progress. It is as if the historic event of Confederation was a prognosticated “concept” predicated on the Fathers’ efforts for cooperative and “constructive work of a magnitude and in the face of obstacles never before tackled anywhere in the world”¹⁴. This is the D.N.A of Canada – as an ever-growing nation, susceptible to bumps-in-the-road, with a multi-layered and complex history from its inception.

The promise of a bright future for Canada came from its proud past: “As we observe this year the beginning of a new century of Confederation,” he said, “we who find ourselves in positions of authority must always remember that it is our responsibility and our opportunity to serve the needs and aspirations of the Canadian people”¹⁵. Pearson, in both the Speech from the Throne and Leaders’ Day Reply, projects confidence across the board even though the country had been more difficult to run in 1967 “than the unitary centralized government which Sir John A. Macdonald and many others wished for in 1867”¹⁶. We can also observe Pearson’s speeches as inheriting the essence of Canada, something the Leader of the Opposition and previous Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and even Prime Ministers before him could not call their own. The Fathers were undivided in their aspirations to find a definition of Canadian-ness – or a new version of British-ness, back in 1867.

Pearson sought to modernize this theme in evaluating the evolution of the Dominion of Canada for the last 100 years. Even the symbols of national unity Pearson ushered in the mid-1960s were important to the concept of national identity; they spoke volumes of how the country continued on the same path from Confederation. The Maple Leaf Flag (1964) and the creation of the Order of Canada (1965) acted as pre-cursor supports for bolstering national identity. Pearson is respected today, but we cannot put him in the same league as those great Prime Minister’s like Macdonald, Wilfrid Laurier, or even Mackenzie King. Michael Bliss in *Right Honourable Men* tells us that “by the end of the centennial year, Pearson was largely a lame duck, presiding over a Cabinet that had lost a sense of where it wanted to go”¹⁷. As Bliss opines, Pearson was the type of leader who knew his limits and chose not to surpass them. Pearson was a “transitional figure” who kept a steady hand on the wheel.¹⁸ The imprint Pearson left on the Liberal mold was a brand of politics that has somewhat been put to the back of our recent memory’s catalogue of Prime Ministers, but he no longer is underappreciated in Canadian history. Bliss’s metaphor of Pearson’s impact on our country, as a leader, is that of a pitcher in baseball, Pearson’s mainstay sport: although he was a consistent and reliable enough middle-inning, short duration pitcher, Pearson’s only real strength was to “keep his team in the game”, game in and game out, gracefully bowing out when he felt he needed to. No bright spots – he just had to keep it simple.¹⁹



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and her Canadian Ministers at Rideau Hall. Prime Minister Pearson is seated to the right of the Queen.

Constitutionality and Federal and Provincial Relations

Some see Pearson as either a harbinger of dividing equal attention between cooperative and classic federalism, or as a Prime Minister who brought in a different approach to help iron out issues on provincial-federal unity. 1967 was near the end of Pearson's tenure in office, so by the time of his Centennial speech and reply the federal government's promises on provincial matters came out bluntly: "I believe the federal government", he said, "has a duty to suggest *new* ways in which it may help the provinces and the municipalities, without interfering with their responsibilities to cope more effectively".²⁰ Questions loomed over constitutional representation, provincially, and patriation, federally. For Pearson, these issues relentlessly reared their unwanted heads into the political picture. Amongst many agenda issues, the provinces created rifts between them and the central government. Provincial-federal matters in the 1960s were not cookie-cutter problems, nor could they be fixed in a roundabout fashion; each premier had his own platforms to stand on, calling on the federal government by 1964 to amend provincial rights and the *British North America Act of 1867*. They did not need any explanations, just action – to ensure that things would not stay the same under Pearson. In Pearson's Throne Speech, pluralism (allowing group diversity and individualism to flourish in society), rural community building, urban initiatives and resource management geared Pearson's rhetoric towards capitalizing on Canada's internal relationship with each of the provinces and territories.²¹ Moreover, noting the constitution's "structure [which] has endured and served so well" allowed a light to be shone onto the theme of progress and Canada's preservation of democratic politics and liberal values.²² These, within Pearson's Liberal theory of P.O.G.G. (peace, order and good government), highlight the importance of federalism and the constitution. The significance of the constitution within the theme of federal-provincial relations comes out in his Leaders' Day Reply:

Today the constitution remains the most important single element in our government. In some ways, perhaps, it is the most important single element in our achievements. It is the source of the rights and

jurisdiction of the provincial as well as the federal governments. It is a protection for all the people, especially minorities. So an obvious and vital factor in our national growth is our constitution.²³

He was criticized by Diefenbaker in the reply, and Pearson responded frankly: “Canada has shown by its own record of achievement that a federal system does not mean weakness at any level and that a country can develop under a federal system of government.”²⁴ Cooperation between the provinces and the federal government was, to Pearson, a stronghold built upon federal and national heritage: “[The Fathers] built according to a federal plan because they knew that unity, with cultural and regional diversity, could be harnessed to a positive and enriching role in no other way.”²⁵ This extended into the realms of rights for women, minority groups, and French-Canadians; for example, the appointments of Bilingualism and Biculturalism, and Women’s Royal Commissions overhauled the nationalist agenda in favour of keeping tabs on all geo-political and socio-political matters. Be it cultural or regional differences, gender empowerment or racial equality, solidarity could only come from below, but it started with a common bond. Freedoms for the provinces such as shared policies and joint-programs were discussed openly as programs of nation-building. Enlarged spending power and a fair division of attention between social and political issues were high on the list for Pearson, as the 1960s represented a time where people, more than ever before in twentieth century Canada, “raised questions about the capacity of governments to control their lives and protect society from the excesses of corporate greed.”²⁶

The rhetorical seeds of opportunity and responsibility were sown into the Centennial Sessions. Reconfiguring the constitution was partially secondary in 1967. Pearson desired that Canada’s economic sphere of influence, internal protectionism and foreign affairs took priority. But the following year demonstrated that the provinces could up their anti as they volleyed for more guarantees and protections such as language rights and financial support from the federal government. To make things more complicated, Quebec began to regard itself as having ‘special status’ claims within the constitution framework showing the constraints of the Pearson period.²⁷ Pearson attempted to right the wrongs of past Prime Ministers by showing adversaries like Diefenbaker to see the real picture for what it was: that Canada was still, by 1967, one nation and not two. In his Leaders’ Day Reply to Diefenbaker, who had said that Canada was never in such a state of division before in its history, Pearson spoke about compromise and accommodation: “language and cultural differences introduce politically complicating as well as nationally enriching elements in our society”, setting the stage for 1968’s constitutional talks.²⁸



Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson at a press conference announcing the new Canadian flag, December 1964.

Pearson's Rhetoric of Internationalism

Pearson was indeed a person who had a mission for peace and international involvement. Peace was no better exemplified than in Pearson's views on Vietnam, showing stamina and surety of conviction:

I do not think it would improve our opportunities on working for peace if we took an active position as a government, with the responsibility as a government, on one side or the other in the particularly difficult and dangerous situation in Viet Nam, because it is a dangerous situation and is, I think, causing more anxiety today than it had at any time since I have been trying to follow it.²⁹

Even in praising Paul Martin Sr. in the Leaders' Day Reply by going so far as to say "there is no person in the western world who has worked harder to bring about negotiations of peace",³⁰ his political ideals yield to larger forces, in close proximity with international affairs. The issues of foreign investment in Canada was brought about by Walter Gordon who influenced Pearson to adopt a conservative nationalist government by the late 1960s.³¹ What then, was there to protect Canada's domestic interests? This was the first serious question for Pearson: there had to be some yielding to the temptation to associate too closely with others, even our southern neighbors. American investment was criticized by the left in Canada, some of whom supported Pearson.³²

Thus, Pearson had to find ears elsewhere. In the international arena is where Pearson can be credited for what some call quiet diplomacy. He was not an anti-continentalist but he was a vehement opponent of anti-American sentiment in Canada³³ in keeping with the tradition to have bilateral trade relations stay afloat. But he was not about to aide America militarily by sending troops to Vietnam. Nation-building, then, was not an America-Canada nationalist contest to Pearson. The past spoke volumes about his international involvement. Ultimately he was helping to develop "discourses in which Canadian distinction could be remarked upon and celebrated" at the international level.³⁴ To quote Jack Granatstein: "[the] Yanks fought wars, Canadians said...while Johnny Canuck kept the peace...Peacekeeping was so popular...primarily because it was something we could do and the Americans could not."³⁵ The international stage that Canada shared was with the United Nation, N.A.T.O., and other institutions where countries who were considered partners or allies could come together. Canada's plans for external aide and international trade were among some of the topics included in his speeches.

His Centennial Speeches remind us, however, of his unshakable confidence in his government's global vision. Canada's government to Pearson had to be functional at home and abroad. In his 1967 Throne Speech, peace, disarmament, and all matters of diplomacy-through-settlement were persuasive in that Pearson subtly was calling on other countries' leaders to realize that a "concerted international endeavour" must be undertaken if progress was to be met with satisfaction.³⁶ But these were mere words on paper, possible worlds of actions. Pearson's sanguine good nature coupled with a peaceful international image was constructive. Pearson's interest in international affairs was actually conceived early on in his life; he, like others his age, was influenced by his generation's experiences from The Great War. Militancy and opposition attitudinized Pearson's stance on foreign conflict which took precedent over "pre-constitutional" matters.³⁷ It's not that constitutional matters were less important for Pearson but that "dramatic threats to security that in [his] day dominated the international agenda"³⁸ affected his political theorizing. In the international community is where Pearson's humility and stoicism went a long way; a ripple effect throughout his development in politics:

...I do not think that as a responsible government it would be wise or desirable or necessary for us to publicly condemn or publicly proclaim. I think it is better for us to play our part as a member of the international commission and of the international community and work in a quiet, not spectacular but as effective a way as possible...³⁹

Conclusion

Pearson said that “The speech from the throne reflect [sic] in general terms the need for government to improve the opportunities for every Canadian to live a better life.”⁴⁰ A Leaders’ Day Reply, I might add, shows, on the other hand, the masterful political sparing necessary to defend one’s values. For any Prime Minister, their values are invested in creating the type of Canada they desire. Indeed, their reassurance in these types of speeches, in retrospect, give readers today that especial advantage of looking at the past with hindsight, while contemporarily people sometimes balked at and dismissed their leaders for their judgement or foresight. But Canada is still one nation, held together by the very men and women working from Parliament Hill. Pearson is one of those people who already has a place in the annals of Canadian history, who devoted much of his life to improving the Canadian political system – domestically and internationally. This essay has elucidated on some of Lester B. Pearson’s political values, nation-building projects and his themes on progress, opportunity and achievement. Through an analysis of his Centennial Speeches this essay narrates translucently just how Canada’s history, national fabric and place in the world essentially highlighted Lester Pearson’s vision for Canada on its 100th birthday.

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4. An Analytical Review of Pierre Trudeau's Speeches from the Throne: Becoming Prime Minister in 1968 and 1980

DAYLE STEFFEN

Introduction

The nature of Canada's national identity is a progressively changing ideal that shifts across time, and this is never made clearer than through the speech from the Throne. Each version is written under the watchful eye of the Prime Minister and read by the Governor General to open a new session of parliament.¹ The idea speech delivers a set of goals the government hopes to achieve, and charts the direction for the country. The Speech is focused on what the government holds as its central values and key concerns to better the nation. In short, the Speech from the Throne outlines what the new government plans to do to improve the country and what key aspects of identity on which it chooses to focus. What is interesting about an investigation of the Throne Speech is how the sense of what makes up Canada's "national identity" almost always changes in some way or another under each new Prime Minister, as they outline what they believe Canada stands for as a nation, both domestically and internationally, and what its people should identify as.

One of the most significant of these changes occurred under Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, as he placed such emphasis on social liberties and equality. His emphasis on those values had an incredible impact on Canada's people in so many ways. Yet Prime Minister Trudeau's Speeches from the Throne contained more than just this declaration; in fact, his vision for the country was so encompassing that his Speeches from the Throne were more like a point-by-point plan on what he hoped his government would accomplish, rather than presenting a more generalized vision for the country. It is not possible in a single chapter to consider all of Trudeau's Speeches from the Throne that cover his 16 years in office. Rather, this paper examines what the vision for the country was when he first took office in 1968, and again when he was re-elected to office in 1980, comparing how these Speeches from the Throne were similar and different, and provides a snapshot his vision for Canada, and how it evolved over his time as Prime Minister.

Background

Pierre Trudeau was born on October 18, 1919 to a family of comfortable means and security, who would later become wealthy due to his father's savvy business skills.² This enabled young Trudeau, when he grew up, to attend prestigious educational institutions, such as l'Universit  de Montreal, and Harvard University, where he attained his doctorate in law after writing his dissertation on the relationship between Marxism and Christianity.³ He later became a professor of law at l'Universit  de Montreal, and concerned himself with the status of French speaking people in Canadian society.⁴ Of note, Trudeau also engaged in anti-conscription protests during World War II from 1942-44, referring to the war as "an exercise in British colonialism and imperialism" in which he felt that the French people in particular would pay dearly.⁵ Even from this early age, Trudeau demonstrated his loyalty to the French Canadian populace, but also to his ideals of non-violence and restraint from becoming involved in what he thought of as unnecessary international conflicts This would later play a significant role with the direction in which he drove the country as Prime Minister.



The Right Honourable Pierre E. Trudeau voting, 1968.

Moving into office in 1968, Trudeau was met with a country that was in the throes of social reform and unrest. Movements such as Quebec's FLQ and the Red Power were demanding immediate federal and provincial action to grant liberties to the marginalized groups they represented, and to introduce reparative legislation for long-term sustainability.⁶ Additionally, the post-WWII economic boom had begun to decline as industrialization slowed and inflation began to rise, causing financial strain across the Western world.⁷

Unfortunately, these same concerns continued throughout the 1970's, becoming even more pronounced, so that in 1980 when Trudeau was re-elected to office⁸, the situation in the country was reaching a breaking point. On the social side, English-French relations were at an all-time low and culminated in the Quebec Referendum of 1980.⁹ In the West, a rising feeling of being alienated by the federal government resulted in the beginnings of the new Western separatist movement.¹⁰ Additionally, the economic situation was also very bleak, and Canada was facing a serious recession due to a stale economy and lack of a diversified workforce.¹¹ Indeed, at a glance, the climate in Canada from 1968 to 1980 had only changed in terms of its severity, but not its nature.

Speech of the Throne, 1968¹²

This first Throne Speech of the new Trudeau Administration, delivered on September 12, 1968, was delivered by the Governor General, the Right Honorable Daniel Roland Michener for the opening of the 28th session of Parliament.¹³ Right away upon its opening words, the speech directed its attention towards the concerns of the Canadian people as a whole and addressed the need for the new government to connect more closely and openly with the people it governs. As one way of achieving this objective, it promised to ask Parliament to dispense with old and cumbersome procedures in the House of Commons and adopt more expedient policies that could work towards the changes that Canadians wanted and that were needed in a progressively modern society.¹⁴

The Speech then ambitiously addresses the idea of creating a unified Canada that would build greater cohesion with all of its people across the nation. One of the ways it hoped would build national unity was through a new Official Languages Act based on the recommendation of the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Trudeau believed that would then build increased equality and representation of both English and French as Canada's official languages; better and strengthen attachment to all languages across the nation. He also promised better and fairer treatment to Status "Indians" (First Nations and Indigenous people), increased funding for transportation systems, educational programs, public television, and postal services.¹⁵ The rationale for such initiatives, as was explained, was simple: to create a constitution and government that protected the unity of all Canadians. At the same time, Trudeau announced in the Throne Speech that the federal government was in talks with the provinces to create a new constitution. The 1968 Throne Speech, particularly its short-term objectives, were designed to address immediate need while the constitution was being designed and patriated, or so the tone of the speech implies. The overall theme of the Speech was one of "righting of wrongs" in terms of creating a more just and equal Canadian society that reflects the values of humanitarianism and fairness.¹⁶ Its central objective was to afford all Canadians, the opportunity to have equal and easy access to economic opportunity and material gains, to develop new departments and initiatives to combat poverty, and to give proper recognition and representation to those groups that had been marginalized and "know what it is to feel injustice."¹⁷ Within such a framework, there was a recognition that poverty cannot be immediately eliminated and that it was an ongoing process, just as fighting inequality. Yet Trudeau believed that if governments continue to be committed to these causes, then real societal change would occur. To this end, a promise was made to increase pensions for seniors, to create better programs for the sick and infirm, and to create a new department to provide better supports for economic opportunities to all Canadians.¹⁸



Pierre Trudeau giving speech at "NO" referendum (flag in background), Montreal, 1980.

The Throne Speech also addressed Canada's economic standing in the world. It proposed changes to the Criminal

Code so that fairer justice be given to workers in terms of labor laws and disputes. The Speech discussed with great emphasis the need to create a competitive and self-sufficient Canadian economy that could stand up against “more advanced nations in the world”.¹⁹ Trudeau believed that to combat poverty, create diverse employment opportunity, and support Canadians’ desire for an increasingly material and comfortable lifestyle, the economy needed to change and grow. This section of the speech is interesting in that it is one of the few times international concerns were really discussed in any detail, and yet even within this, the larger focus is still placed on the immediate impact to Canadians, with internationalism only a by-product. For instance, the idea of helping to stabilize the world’s unsteady economics is discussed, and it was suggested that Canada needed to engage in more free and open trade with its partners around the world, yet the central point remained focused on reducing taxation and inflation for Canadians at home.²⁰

The Speech does briefly discuss international concerns. Again, the idea of identity and national unity comes up in the proposal that policies be enacted to support conservation efforts both in terms of the natural environment and resources of the country, and also in terms of national parks and heritage sites. The idea here is to protect physical markers of the Canadian identity to be enjoyed by future generations. As it relates to international concerns, the idea being discussed here seems to be to shape part of Canada’s international identity by its geographical landscape that would then work in tandem with the tourism industry. It is this point that leads into the discussion of international responsibilities.²¹

Trudeau was concerned about human rights and equality, not only in Canada but internationally as well. This Throne Speech emphasized the importance of Canada’s obligation to offer humanitarian aid. He was particularly concerned about several important international concerns occurring at that time: the Vietnamese War, the civil unrest in Nigeria, and rising communism and human rights concerns in Czechoslovakia. In fact, the Speech made a direct promise to offer permanent homes in Canada to Czech refugees. However, because of the “slow progress” and “deeply concerning” turn of these international issues, the government would choose to focus more closely on domestic concerns rather than international ones.²²

At the end of the Speech, it reiterated its priority to address the concerns of the Canadian people, and the importance of protecting the populace and protect democracy in light of the tenuous global situation. Reiterating the idea of parliamentary reforms, increased social equality, economic growth and opportunity, and natural conservation, the speech ends on a note that speaks to the core concerns of the Canadian people, and related strongly to what Trudeau believed sat at the heart of what it should mean to be a Canadian; strongly focused on the idea of human rights and equal treatment for all people, the Speech leaves the reader with the strong impression of the need to cherish and protect this aspect of Canadian identity.

Speech of the Throne, 1980

In many ways, this Speech from the Throne represented new beginnings for the Trudeau Administration as well as for the country. It was delivered on April 14, 1980 by the Governor General, the Right Honourable Edward Richard Schreyer, opened the 32nd session of parliament.²³ Trudeau was fresh out of a federal election victory, which had immediately followed his announcement that he would step down as leader of the Liberal Party following his election defeat that had been just nine months earlier in 1979.²⁴ This speech was also delivered on the heels of a royal visit from Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, and acknowledged gratitude for the royal visit, and announced the excited prospect of two more royal engagements happening soon. The Speech noted Canada’s close Commonwealth ties as well, making note of the royal accession of the Netherlands’ Princess Beatrix.²⁵

Like Trudeau’s first Throne Speech in 1968, this one too focused on Canada itself, with Trudeau including comments on how he and his wife had the opportunity to see every provincial capital and their plans to make another cross-country trip to see smaller communities, engaging with the Canadian people more directly and personally. This Speech very much spoke of national pride before turning to parliamentary goals for the upcoming session.²⁶ The acknowledgement of meeting Canadians was clearly aimed at addressing the divisions in the nation. After all, Trudeau

had just been returned to a majority government but his party won only one seat west of Ontario-Manitoba border and he faced the prospect of a referendum in Quebec on sovereignty-association.²⁷ The nation was divided.

The Throne Speech recognized that division and noted: “Canada faces many challenges”, but offered a positive outlook with the idea that a united Canada can overcome any obstacle.²⁸ It then outlined Trudeau’s priorities, including the need to address Parliament and introduce new and much needed measures to deal with pressing matters. He wanted to focus on creating security for the elderly, equality for women, opportunities for youth, stimulating the economy, improving Canada’s international influence and relations, and strengthening national institutions that work collaboratively with the provinces and territories. It was an agenda that resembled some of his priorities from 1968, and addressed once again the issue of Canadian unity.²⁹

The Speech makes no effort to mask Canada drastic social divisions and civil unrest, from the Atlantic, to Central Canada, to the West. It addressed the various grievances held in different parts of the country, and vehemently stated that this new federal government and its parliament would commit itself first and foremost to the promise of uniting Canada and adhering to the core ideals of what makes the country work. It promoted Canada as a country strong in the loyalty of its people, a country of diversity that promoted enterprise, a country that shares its wealth with the needy, and a country responsive to the needs of the world at large. It was a vision of Canada that Trudeau believed captured the sentiment of a united Canada, but in his 1980 Throne Speech he made specific reference to the upcoming Quebec referendum. More pointedly, he asked the question at the beginning of a new decade, would Canada survive through the 1980’s as a united country?³⁰

The Speech then presented a five-point agenda that the government believed was necessary to focus on for the country to move forward. The first addressed the economic hardship Canadians faced as they moved into the 1980’s, believing that Canadians were “sensible” and “will accept sacrifice” in order to weather the storm of rising global inflation and increased financial strain.³¹ Showing Canada as a caring nation, Trudeau announced that the government would dedicate what limited federal resources there were to help those Canadians in need. Particular mention was made for those home owners facing foreclosures, small business entrepreneurs facing a dim prospect, and farmers facing uncertainty, though it does specifically make a point in saying that no subsidy programs for these groups would be implemented at that time. Conversely however, the government’s plan included an immediate monthly increase to the old age pension system, making specific note that it would greatly benefit single pensioners, the majority of whom were women, thus bringing in a feminist humanitarian policy. Similar measures emphasized the importance of human rights in terms of the economy, discussing how it was crucial and a top priority of the government to act as a leading force in the equal opportunity for marginalized groups, including the training and hiring of diverse Canadians, including Indigenous people, the physically or mentally challenged, youth, and women. The Speech also promoted protecting the rights of these groups, including making changes to the Criminal Code for crimes of violence against women in particular.³²

The Speech went on to address the energy sector, and placed great emphasis on the need to secure Canadian ownership and responsibility of its own oil and natural gas resources. Amidst recent increases in the price of energy, Trudeau was determined to use Canada’s reserves for the benefit of the national community even if doing so alienated the energy-producing provinces such as Alberta.³³ To achieve his objectives, the Throne Speech promised several measures, including the idea of introducing a Canadian-made oil price to lower costs for consumers, the need to divert use away from oil towards natural gas and electricity for conservation efforts, to increase federal funding to Petro-Canada as a key corporation in the industry, and to engage in new negotiations for oil and gas trade internationally.³⁴

The first and second parts of the Throne Speech closely relate to the third element, which, focused on rebuilding the economy. Trudeau recognized the problems created by a rising federal deficit, saying that while this government planned to reduce the deficit, it would not entirely eliminate it at the potential cost of other important initiative included in the Throne Speech. He then outlined key steps the government would take to stimulate economic growth, including an emphasis on the Food and Agriculture industries (becoming increasingly important in the 1980’s it claimed), a renewed focus on safe and reliable transportation services, improved access to revenue from fisheries, and improved science and technology industries to diversify and enhance the economy. Emphasis was also placed on keeping the

economy Canadian-owned, and he promised to make revision to the Foreign Investment Review Act that would lead to greater opportunity for small Canadian-owned business to grow and expand in competition with larger corporations.³⁵

Trudeau was also concerned with how the government operated as he had been in 1968. Consequently, the Throne Speech provide a plan to deal with national institutions to create a more efficient, effective, and united federal government and country. To this end, Trudeau planned to not only review electoral reform to make it more representative and just, but also to renew the constitutional efforts to repatriate the constitution to include a charter of rights and freedoms. Such an initiative would enshrine language equality and provide equal representation for both English and French speaking citizens. Transparency within the government was also promised, noting in particular, plans for a Freedom of Information Act and the removal of the right by Ministers to withhold federal information from the courts. All of this was designed to create trust between the government and the people. The Speech discussed the idea of RCMP reform and review, and increasing the security of individual's information and use of it.³⁶

Foreign policy was also included as a key component of the Speech. While the section was brief, its message was clear: the government promised to take a hard-line stance against the arms race. In fact, the Speech even uses the phrase "suffocate the deadly growth of nuclear arsenals in the world."³⁷ To achieve this end, the government announced plans is to commit itself to a strong NATO defence pact while engaging in disarmament talks with nations around the world.³⁸

As a final item, the 1980 Speech from the Throne offered a short commentary on the rising feeling of Western alienation, which was promptly dismissed with the statement that parliamentary members needed to better represent their constituencies to the federal government, while also properly representing the federal government back home.³⁹ As was discussed previously, Trudeau did not have a popular standing in the Western provinces, thus adding to their growing feeling of being unheard and underrepresented, being "alienated" by the federal government. This sentiment was so strong that it caused Trudeau to directly address it in closing this Speech.

Comparison and Analysis

Both of the Speeches from the Throne from 1968 and 1980 provides valuable insights into the state of the country at the time, as well as into the mindset of Pierre Trudeau upon taking office and after more than a decade of being Prime Minister. While they contain much in common in terms of content, the tone and delivery of these speeches stand in stark contrast to each other. They also show an interesting dynamic of shifting perspectives and approaches in handling very similar concerns and issues.

The 1968 speech delivers a tone of refined dignity, using advanced language that impresses upon the audience the intellect and competency of the government and of Trudeau himself. Such a rhetoric might have been embraced specifically to showcase his higher education, but it had the effect of making the speech less accessible to the general populace as it was laden with more dense terminology and phrasing. What is clear from this speech though, is that while it takes aim at addressing the concerns of the Canadian people, the speech itself was not directed towards the populace, rather it is directed to the parliamentary members. This contrasts markedly with the 1980 speech, which uses much more simplified language and attempts to speak directly to the Canadian people in addition to addressing the Parliament. Trudeau seems to be trying to address the rising movement of malcontent across the country; while both speeches address the need to unify the country and bring the people together, such a message is much more pronounced in the 1980 speech due to the much more prevalent instances of dissatisfaction that can be found in the Quebec referendum and the Western alienation movement. Also, because of these things, the 1980 speech presents a more pronounced note of impatience and frustration that the country is not as unified as what had previously been hoped.

The content of the speeches are remarkably similar, addressing many of the same concerns such as the necessity of spurring economic growth, focusing heavily on domestic concerns rather than international ones, creating a more efficient and accessible parliamentary body and process, and preserving Canada both as a country of civil rights and liberties but also as a geographical beauty. Yet, once again, the delivery of these issues are achieved in different ways. In

the 1968 speech, a more direct and detailed explanation of how the government plans to meet these goals was outlined, including specific targets to meet and pieces of legislation that were to be brought before parliament. In the 1980 speech, a more generalized approach is delivered, offering only a few instances of detailed planning but focusing more intently on the overall goal the government hopes to achieve in each policy area consider. With this as well, the 1968 speech provides a much more positive outlook on the national and global situations, making reference to the strength of Canadians, the opportunities of the country, the beauty of it, and so on, whereas the 1980 speech quite starkly discussed the difficult climate Canadians faced both domestically and internationally. It even speaks to the very bleak and difficult times ahead and the challenges that will be faced in the ensuing decade.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with Prime Minister The Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau signing the Proclamation of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Considering those two Throne Speeches, what does it say about Pierre Trudeau as Prime Minister? How has he shaped Canada's national identity today? To first tackle the question of Pierre Trudeau, the answer lies in the themes present throughout these two speeches. For example, when looking at the 1968 speech, it is clear that as a new Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau wanted to introduce his government with a sense of grandiosity and accomplishment, unveiling an ambitious and detailed plan for bettering the nation. With the central focus in 1968 being placed on human rights concerns in almost all sectors of the speech, Trudeau distinguished himself as a leader working for the people, rather than just ruling over them. His clear vision for the country was also unwavering, as seen in the 1980 speech, and it was that steadfastness that continued to drive through the importance of Canada being distinguished as a country of civil liberties and equality. Yet, because of the complexity and sophistication of the 1968 speech, it made the 1980 speech much more pronounced in its pointed directness and simplicity, signifying a change in attitude and perspective on behalf of Mr. Trudeau. That note of impatience shines through much more brightly as a result, bringing forth the obvious tensions felt across the country and the increased challenges facing Trudeau's vision for a united country. In light of this, it makes him, as a Prime Minister, seem almost stubborn in adhering to his original vision for the country without much (if any) change in the direction he hoped to take. While much can be said on this matter and approach in terms of Trudeau as a person and politician, the impact on is also clear: because of his unwillingness to compromise his vision for the country, he continued to push through an agenda focused heavily on domestic concerns centered around creating

economic opportunities to a more socially equal society, and because of this, Canada today still strongly identifies as a country of civil liberties and equality

Conclusion

Both of these Speeches from the Throne provide an incredibly interesting and insightful glimpse into not only the situation in the country at the time when each Speech was delivered, but also into the development of the man behind the speech, Pierre Trudeau. From his first time in office in 1968, until when he was re-elected to office in 1980, his approach in addressing his government and the Canadian people evolves from a more formal and rigid stance into a direct, upfront, and almost impatient tone. While the speeches themselves contain much of the same content in terms of nationalism, economy, international affairs, and more, the delivery of the speeches stand in stark contrast with each other and show a clear evolution of Trudeau's plan for uniting a divided country. Clearly the state of discontent in the country, which threatened of his central goal of unity, was a great source of strain within the inner workings of the government and with him personally. Despite this, however, the ideas of social equality and human rights advocacy continued as strong themes that persisted in both speeches, evolving over time to reflect the shifting needs of the Canadian people. Trudeau's ongoing commitment to fighting for human justice is what ultimately shaped an important aspect of the Canadian national identity. Without his vision for the country, Canada's sense of national identity today would not include such an entrenched aspect of civil liberties and equality.

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5. Reinventing Canada: National Unity and Canadian Identity in the Mulroney Years

DEKLEN WOLBAUM

Introduction

Brian Mulroney continues to exist in the collective memory of many Canadians as a profoundly unpopular prime minister. The failure of the Meech Lake Accord and the Charlottetown Accord, and the recession in the early 1990s, together with the introduction of the hated Goods and Service Tax (GST) led to the collapse of the Progressive Conservatives in 1993, leaving the party with a meagre two seats in Parliament after the 1993 federal election. Examining the changes in the Mulroney government's Throne Speeches and his Leaders' Day Addresses allow us to understand the evolving ideas that the Mulroney government had about the Canadian identity and how to achieve national unity. The Throne Speeches allowed Mulroney to connect with the Canadian people and they revealed to the country the government's wishes and goals for Canada. These speeches not only *tell* Canadians what the government planned to do, but they often *defined* and *reinvented* the Canadian identity. The government of Brian Mulroney largely achieved those objectives in the Throne Speeches. His speech in 1984 was centred on the idea of reinventing the Canadian identity and creating a new Canada. These reinventions, however, did not succeed in uniting Canada as Prime Minister Brian Mulroney had hoped.



Mr. Brian Mulroney and Mrs. Mila Mulroney speaking to Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the gala event for the swearing-in on the Governor-General Jeanne Sauve held at the National Art Center, 1984.

The Mulroney government broke the long-standing Liberal dominance over Canada when his party captured more than fifty-percent of the popular vote and an unprecedented 211 seats in Parliament in 1984.¹ Mulroney crafted a coalition of Quebec nationalists, Eastern Tories, and Western economic and social conservatives within the Progressive Conservative party, and he convinced them that he was the person to lead his party to victory and replace the long-governing Liberals.² When the Mulroney government came to power in 1984, they had inherited a Canada that faced a number of severe challenges. Canada's disunity and fragmentation had heightened under the Government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, especially when the Canadian constitution was revised without the agreement of the Quebec Government and when Trudeau introduced the National Energy Policy. The divisions within the nation were reflected in the tensions between Western and Eastern Canada and between English and French-speaking Canadians. The Labour movement and Quebec separatists had been driven to revolt. In the Mulroney government's eyes, Canada had to rebrand and reinvent itself, at home, and on the world stage.

Mulroney's Speeches from the Throne

It was in the Throne Speech of 1984 that the Mulroney government first outlined their vision for the reinvention of the Canadian identity and the ways in which they would rebuild Canadian unity. This would be no easy task, as it

would require fixing the deep divisions between all Canadians. However, the Mulroney government was committed to doing this through the reinvention that they had promised. Some of the first words of the 1984 Throne Speech reflected this promise to Canadians. The Mulroney government told Canadians through the Speech from the Throne read by the Governor General, the Right Honourable Jeanne Sauvé, that “this is the inauguration of a new parliament, let it also be the beginning of a new era of national reconciliation, economic renewal, and social justice.”³ In the eyes of the new government, Canada had to be united and it finally had to find its rightful place in the world.

Bringing Canadians together within one Canada meant that Canadians needed to feel that they were represented and that they, as individuals, had a part to play in the reinvention of Canada. The Mulroney government believed that, addressing this problem would be necessary for solving the east-west divide that Canada had struggled with for so long. In 1980, Pierre Trudeau and his Liberal party had won re-election as a majority government, but they had done so with only two seats east of the Ontario-Manitoba border. Mulroney saw those results as clear evidence of the lack of unity in Canada. In the 1984 Throne Speech, he pointed out that his Conservative party had already started the process of healing the fractious nation when he claimed, “For the first time in many years, all regions in the country are represented in a national government.”⁴ By bringing all Canadians and all sections of the nation into the government, Brian Mulroney hoped that many of the divisions among Canadians would be bridged.

Most importantly, the Throne Speech of 1984 addressed the destructive divisions between English and French Canadians. The Throne Speech first acknowledged the unique reality of Canada. To the Mulroney government, this meant defining Canada as a nation of distinct regional identities and regional economic strengths, each rooted in their *own* generations of history.⁵ The Speech then noted how each of these peoples have a distinct attachment to the idea of one Canada.⁶ Such a sentiment is more revealing than it might seem. Firstly, these lines reveal that Mulroney believed that Canadian national unity relies on the recognition and understanding of differences between the various provinces and regions of Canada. Secondly, he believed that the recognition of these differences, combined with the attachment to being Canadian, was crucial to the Canadian identity and to promoting national unity.

While Mulroney’s vision of Canada recognized the differences and diversities that existed across Canada, it also had a number of core, perhaps romanticized ideas about what it meant to be Canadian. This sentiment was captured in the words read by the Governor General when she said, “My government is committed to ensuring that the equality of the two official languages, so vital to our national character and identity is respected in fact as it is in law.”⁷ While not directly referenced in the 1984 Throne Speech, one can see that the ideas that were realized later in the Meech Lake Accord were embodied in the 1984 Throne Speech, as it stressed what Mulroney believed to be essential to his Canadian narrative. The Throne Speech proclaimed that a new consensus had to be reflected in the laws of Canada. Moreover, Canada would, he maintained, continue to face issues of disunity as long as Quebec refused to consent to the constitutional changes that had been achieved by the nine, predominantly English-speaking provinces and the federal government in 1982.⁸ In the Throne Speech, Mulroney promised a new constitutional accord that would mend the destructive divisions between English and French-speaking Canadians. Those distinct linguistic and cultural differences are what the Mulroney government believed made Canada unique, and he hoped to capitalize on such *distinctly* Canadian differences to create a new national identity.

The Throne Speech of 1984 not only promised the reform and greater recognition of bilingualism but also of federalism itself that had made Canada possible in 1867. The Speech noted, “A priority goal of my ministers will be to breathe a new spirit into Federalism, and restore the faith and trust of all Canadians in the effectiveness of our system of government.”⁹ Mulroney’s goal was to harmonize the relations between the federal and provincial governments, to ensure respect for their respective powers, and end unnecessary and costly duplication. The Speech promoted the importance of cooperative federalism to national unity, stating, “National unity also demands that the two levels of government cooperate in supporting official language minorities, and in fostering the rich multicultural character of Canada.”¹⁰

National reconciliation was also needed in Canada’s economic life, Mulroney believed.¹¹ During the Trudeau era, the federal and provincial governments had quarrelled endlessly over jurisdiction, particularly of natural resources, and Mulroney believed those confrontations were detrimental to the economic well-being of Canada. To the Mulroney government, the country’s economic health would only recover if the federal government recognized that the provinces

could manage many economic matters, such as those concerning the oil and gas sector, to promote economic growth. Once that occurred, national unity might be restored, and the Canadian identity strengthened.

The public response to the Throne Speech of 1984 was generally positive. The *Globe and Mail* noted that the tone of the speech was one of civility. Words such as *reconciliation* and *consensus-building* were used frequently. The *Globe and Mail* specifically noted that such rhetoric sets the tone for the kind of national unity the Mulroney government hoped to achieve during their time in office.¹² The newspapers did note, however, how vague the speech was. They interestingly commented that in the 1984 Throne Speech the Mulroney government starkly focused more on what the Canadian government *should* do, rather than what it *will* do.¹³ In many ways, the Mulroney's first Throne Speech was aspirational in nature.

The Meech Lake Accord, negotiated in 1987, is one of the most useful examples when examining how the rhetoric of the Mulroney government, and as seen one primary way in which the Throne Speech of 1984, was translated into action. The Meech Lake Accord represented Mulroney's attempt at repairing the deep divisions between English and French-speaking Canadians. Reforming the Constitution that Trudeau had enacted in 1982 was seen to be of the utmost importance in rebuilding Canadian unity and for recognizing in the Constitution diversity as the basis of the Canadian identity. To that end, the Mulroney government believed that reform of the *Constitution Act, 1982* was essential.¹⁴

However, reforming the *Constitution Act, 1982* would only be possible if Mulroney and the provincial premiers accepted the conditions that Robert Bourassa, the Premier of Quebec, put forth.¹⁵ These conditions were significant and deeply unpopular amongst many English-speaking Canadians. Primarily, the conditions demanded that Quebec be recognized as a distinct society, and that Quebec's right to a veto over future constitutional changes be recognized.¹⁶ Such demands were deeply unpopular, especially as many English Canadians shared Pierre Trudeau's view of "across-the-board" equality of all Canadians under the constitution.

Although the Meech Lake Accord failed to be ratified by all of the provinces and failed to bridge the divide with Quebec over constitutional matters, it did show that the Mulroney government could bring some agreement among the provincial premiers. At the 1986 the Annual Premiers' Conference, it had been unanimously agreed that the top constitutional priority would be to use Quebec's proposals "as a basis for discussion, to bring about Quebec's full and active participation in the Canadian Federation."¹⁷ Doing so was one way in which the Progressive Conservatives made good on their promises of cooperative federalism. The Meech Lake Accord was explicitly designed to address the conditions that Quebec had declared essential to its participation in constitutional reform.¹⁸ Through the Accord, the Mulroney government had tried to rebuild national unity with the inclusion of Quebec in the reinvention of the Canadian identity.



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Brian Mulroney addresses the House of Commons for the last time as Prime Minister in February 1993.

It is important to note that the Meech Lake Accord did not unite English and French Canadians; it only made the divisions more pronounced. Many in Quebec were angered by the failure and so were many English-speaking Canadians. Despite his hopes of national reconciliation, Brian Mulroney left office in 1993 with the nation as divided as it was when he became prime minister. In fact, the ideas of Quebec separatism was more robust than when he came to power some nine years earlier.¹⁹ In many ways, the failure of the Meech Lake Accord to fix national unity through constitutional reform is mirrored by Pierre Trudeau's attempt to fix national unity *through* the constitution as well. Mulroney would attempt constitutional reform a second time in 1992 through the Charlottetown Accord, but it, too, resulted in furthering the destructive divide between English and French Canadians as well as with Indigenous Peoples. Although the Charlottetown Accord represented many of the ideals proclaimed in Mulroney's 1984 and 1991 Throne Speeches, it too, proved a failure because it appeased neither French nor English-speaking Canadians.²⁰

The final throne speech of the Mulroney government took place in May of 1991. By then, the rhetoric of these speeches had shifted. The differences between the 1984 Throne Speech and 1991's Throne Speech reflected a Canada that was still profoundly disunited. The 1991 Throne Speech focused on proposals that were to be given to Canadians, which would address the three major concerns facing Canadians: unity, prosperity, and government responsiveness.²¹

The 1991 Throne Speech placed a greater emphasis than earlier Throne Speeches on internationalism and its importance to Canada's health and well-being and to Canadian national unity. Again, similar to the 1984 Throne Speech, the Mulroney government noted that Canada's role in the world is integral to the Canadian identity. Like earlier prime ministers, Mulroney proclaimed that, "Around the world, Canada is respected in the constructive role we play in global

affairs.”²² The greater emphasis on internationalism in this speech reflects the Mulroney government’s push for further free trade policies with the United States and Mexico, which built upon the 1988 free trade agreement that Mulroney had negotiated with the US.



Prime Minister Mulroney signing the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement, 2 January 1988.

Still, the Throne Speech continued its desperation in the strong words it used to exclaim the need for national unity. The language was striking as the Mulroney government seemed to beg Canadians in their plea for national unity. “To realize our great promise,” the Speech remarked, “we must rebuild Canadian unity, and overcome the acrimony, apathy, and incomprehension that currently undermine it.”²³ This plea followed the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, and a significant portion of the Throne Speech was dedicated to addressing the need for English-French reconciliation in the name of national unity. The Mulroney government returned to the rhetoric of 1984, but with a greater sense of urgency.²⁴ As they had done in the 1984 Throne Speech, they again tied national identity to unity, claiming, “A constitution should unite a nation. Canadians across this country should be able to see themselves, and their hopes and admirations mirrored in the constitution. It is the one document that all Canadians should refer to with pride. That is not presently the case in Canada.”²⁵ No task was more critical to the Mulroney government than making the constitution an accurate reflection of who Canadians were.²⁶

The importance of foreign policy to the national identity that the Mulroney government touted in the Throne Speech was reinforced by the way that the Mulroney government attempted to present Canada on the world stage.²⁷ It was determined to make Canada an important global player in a way that the Liberals had not been able to do so under Prime Minister Trudeau.²⁸ One of the most significant examples of that role was Mulroney government’s success at negotiating the Free Trade Agreement, with the US and Mexico’s inclusion in the trade agreement to later create NAFTA.²⁹ To the Mulroney government, keeping and building good relations with Washington, especially, directly

correlated with what they claimed was an essential element of the *economic renewal* of Canada outlined in their 1984 and 1991 Throne Speeches.

Canada's internationalism under the Mulroney government was not just directed at the United States, however. The Canadian values that the Mulroney government hoped to promote were tested in the 1980s as sanctions were placed upon South Africa for the repeal of their Apartheid laws. Although the sanctions were condemned by British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the United States, Mulroney held firm in his promotion of the importance of sanctions to force change.³⁰ In this way, Canada's internationalism would be its own. Although the Mulroney government maintained positive relations with the United States, they recognized, too, that part of the Canadian identity involved being outwardly aggressive to promote Canadian values. This meant supporting the rights of marginalized people across the world, not only in Canada, and standing up to the Americans when necessary.

Conclusion

The Mulroney government was engaged in a pursuit that has been followed by every Canadian government and ever Prime Minister since Confederation and that was the search for a Canadian identity that united Canadians. Achieving that goal, as Mulroney discovered, has been the great Canadian dilemma. It is also one of the most elusive and slippery ideas that Canadians and their political leaders have always grappled with. The task of uniting Canadians under a single national identity is an arduous one. It can be said that the Mulroney government failed to find the Canadian identity as so many others had as well. This is, however, not a criticism of Brian Mulroney as Prime Minister nor of the Mulroney government. Grappling with ideas about Canadian identity has always been complicated. It has been challenging for all Prime Ministers to find a cohesive identity that all Canadians can latch on to. Perhaps a crucial, defining aspect of the Canadian identity is the eternal search for identity by Canadians.

The rhetoric that the Mulroney government used to reinvent the Canadian identity was in stark contrast to that used by the Pierre Trudeau government. Although unsuccessful, the Mulroney government imagined a Canada that was united by its differences and through its diversity. To be different was, in essence, to be Canadian. As such, minority rights needed to be protected, and Mulroney believed to promote and embrace this integral element of the nation is what it means to be Canadian. Once difference and diversity were accepted, Mulroney believed, national unity would follow. If Canada could only recognize and protect minority rights it would be a united country. Canada's place on the world stage also needed to reflect the Canadian identity and foreign espouse must Canadian values. That is what the Mulroney government wanted for Canada on the world stage. The Canadian identity, to Prime Minister Mulroney was inherently *outward* and had to be presented to the international community as the way to build for the future in an increasingly multicultural world. Although the Mulroney government had some considerable success internationally as well as within Canada, it had failed to reinvent a Canadian identity that could be included in Canada's Constitution but it had created a new Canada, especially, economically, that define Canada well into the future.

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6. Jean Chrétien: A Vision of Canada Through an Analysis of His Throne Speeches

A Vision of Canada Through an Analysis of His Throne Speeches

SARAH HOAG

Introduction

For the purpose of this analysis, the Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's Speech from the Throne of 1994 will be compared to his Throne Speech of 2002. This comparison will be supplemented with his response to the Reply of the Official Opposition on Leaders' Day. In the Canadian Parliamentary system, several days are set aside to debate the Throne Speech, and on Leaders' Day, the Leader of the Opposition normally moves an amendment to the motion to accept the Throne followed by the Prime Minister who expands on the items raised in the Throne Speech and defends the policies of his government. The Throne Speech of 1994 was a first for Jean Chrétien as Canada's Prime Minister, and the 2002 speech was his last as Prime Minister, although the Liberal party remained in power following his retirement. Such a comparison of Chrétien's first and last Speeches from the Throne provides an excellent lens with which to analyse Jean Chrétien's vision of Canada over his approximately nine years in office. Though a comparison of all Throne Speeches delivered during Chrétien's time as Prime Minister might also provide an outline of his vision for Canada, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this paper and would merit more than a mere book chapter. In fact, such an analysis would likely require, at least, several monographs. This paper will not seek instead to analyze Chrétien's government on the basis of fulfilling their promises outlined in two separate Throne Speeches. Of course, Political discourse changes over a Prime Minister's tenure, necessitated by a plethora of factors such as fiscal considerations, national sentiments, global events, and many others. This paper, however, seeks only to understand the vision Jean Chrétien demonstrated for Canada by analysing his book-end Throne Speeches, the one at the beginning of his administration and the one at the end of it. As Jean Chrétien said, "A Speech from the Throne is an opportunity for the government to step back and take stock of where it is and set out the priorities for where it wants to go."¹

History and Speeches

The Throne Speeches of the 35th to 37th Parliaments give insight into the Liberal party agenda for Canada in light of the 1991 shift from the Conservative leadership of Canada under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. In many ways, the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien came into a power vacuum. Brian Mulroney, the charismatic and strong Progressive Conservative leader, had stepped down as prime minister and party leader in 1993, leaving some Canadians feeling orphaned². Jean Chrétien, a life-long politician and Liberal, rose to power through his persistence and the unique ideas he had developed in the Liberal party under former leaders Pierre Elliot Trudeau and Lester B. Pearson. As a child and young adult, Jean Chrétien had been the subject of discrimination, classism, and reprisals.³ In comparison to other Canadian politicians of his time, Chrétien's parents were poor which, largely, made Chrétien an outsider in elite political circles.⁴ It is evident in his speeches, however, that Chrétien used such a heritage and upbringing to his advantage during his political career as he was able to convince voters that he understood the class divide many Canadians struggled to overcome.



In June 1969, Ottawa produced a white paper proposing to dismantle Indian Affairs. The formal name of this white paper was the "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969". Jean Chretien was the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in 1969.

Although Chrétien was a lifelong politician, his vision for Canada also emerges from a comparison of Throne Speeches which are in reality little more than a moment in time. They provide considerable insight into his conception of Canada and they provide the primary source for this study. Those Speeches are used to support the arguments made here as well as some of the policies initiated by the Chrétien Government and the biographical materials on Chrétien that were gleaned from a variety of books and peer reviewed articles, including *Iron Man* by Lawrence Martin, "The Scrapper" by Nate Hendley, "A passive internationalist: Jean Chrétien and Canadian foreign policy" by Tom Keating, and others.

Stimulation of the Canadian economy was a primary pillar of the 1994 Speech from the Throne.⁵ Public engagement in Canadian affairs is the primary theme of the 2002 Speech from the Throne, however.⁶ It can be argued that the Chrétien government evolved over the course of their time in office to create a version of Canada that became cohesive and prosperous under his administration. Although a utopia can never be achieved, the list of Liberal "to dos" in 2002 was essentially a list of things they had already achieved but wanted to continue to do, but to do better, and to invest more effort and resources to keep building Canada in that direction.⁷ The 2002 Throne Speech painted the picture for Canadians of a government that had been working tirelessly for them and of Canadians who were working tirelessly for the nation as a collective.⁸ In many ways, the 2002 Speech from the Throne is an ode to Canada whereas the 1994 Speech from the Throne was an elegy for Canada that had suffered and lost its way under Conservative leadership.

Chrétien's first remarks, by way of the Governor General, in the 1994 Speech from the Throne are not earth shaking or revolutionary by any means. An even-keel approach, driven by the request for trust in the Canadian parliamentary institution, provided the basis for the speech. It gave Canadians a sense of security that would attempt to convince them that their trust was not misplaced in electing the Chrétien Government.⁹ Ethic councilors were promised to bring an end to corruption, transparency was promoted, and ministers were to be held accountable by the people and to Parliament.¹⁰ Changes to the public policy formation were promised as a priority of the Chrétien government.¹¹ Although this might seem mundane, it was a way to affirm for Canadians that policy would not be changed by Chrétien himself, but by elected officials acting in the best interests of Canada. Small businesses were targeted as essential to the financial future of Canada. It was, moreover, common knowledge that in 1994 the Chrétien Government and Canada were facing a dire financial situation. Canada was regarded by some internationally as a 'third world debt-ridden nation'

and they mocked its financial struggles. Chrétien wanted Canadians to know that his new Liberal government wanted to educate, invest in, and support small scale Canadian businesses as he believed they would see it as a light in the darkness for many Canadians who were struggling to stay afloat. Parallels can be made back to Chrétien's upbringing in Quebec where his parents were struggling to provide for their children.¹²

Chrétien understood, too, that international trade and strong, efficient Canadian industrial production were critical components for the well-being and success of Canadians and they were important elements of the Throne Speech's emphasis on economic stimulation.¹³ Cultural identity was also linked to his economic plans for Canada. Although the Speech failed to elaborate on how cultural identity in Canada would not only be preserved but also help the economy but his signaling the importance of culture came as a reassurance to Canadians who feared that their cultural sovereignty was threatened by the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement that Mulroney had negotiated in 1988. Chrétien also promised a reviews on foreign policy along with celebrations of D-Day marking Canada's contribution to the liberation of Europe during the Second World War.¹⁴ Chrétien's last Throne speech echoed and built on his first from 1994. In essence, the 2002 Throne Speech attempted to convey a message of hope for Canada – a strategy to rebuild its economy and become a leader on the global scale through the strengthening of small business and increasing trade.

The Chrétien Government's last Throne Speech was very different from that delivered eight years prior. Canada, as a collective, young, and prosperous nation, is presented in a positive light.¹⁵ In comparison to the dire representation of Canada in 1994, Canada was celebrated as a nation of promise. The nation he described in his speech was a force on the global scale, the Canada he shaped had become 'Canada 2.0' in comparison to Canada he inherited from the Conservative Government in 1994. The relationship between Canadians and the Government was the primary focus of Chrétien's last Throne Speech.¹⁶ New issues had also emerged such as climate change and the environment and they became key features of that speech. Such a change might have become priorities of the government because the world had changed by the early 2000's. Another important development in Canada was inter-societal relations especially between the state and Indigenous governments and the 2002 Throne Speech included greater attention on federal relations with Indigenous people in Canada.¹⁷ In terms of economic issues, they were still a priority but the 2002 Throne Speech focused on the maintenance of Canada's strong economic position and the continuance of government diligence as a way to continue the growth the nation had witnessed since 1994.¹⁸ Canada's involvement in the United Nations and other international organizations was also a primary element of the 2002 Throne Speech, along with the events of 9/11 as part of a recapturing the Government's commitment to its people and to world peace.¹⁹ The government had looked to the people of Canada for input on Canada's role in the world. The first Throne Speech in 1994 had not taken direct measures to involve the Canadian public in these matters.²⁰

Over the decade the government had matured and grown more confident and this is evident in the 2002 Throne Speech. While the 1994 Throne Speech dripped with the rhetoric of saving Canada and dealing with a crushing fiscal reality, the 2004 Throne Speech turned optimistic and pointed to a rebuilding of Canada. As such, the healthcare system in Canada became another major focal point of the 2002 Throne Speech as an essential element of creating a caring and compassionate nation. This was also demonstrated in support for lower income families and children which became a priority of the 2002 Throne Speech. It seems that the Throne Speech became a vehicle for Chrétien to reiterate for Canadians that the Liberals had secured Canada financially throughout their three mandates and they now could re-invest in social programs and build on the legacy of past Liberal governments that had created Canada's welfare state.²¹ In both Speeches from the Throne unity was an important issue as it is with all governments in Canada. While the foreign policy of Jean Chrétien had not been well outlined in the Throne Speech of 1994, in the Speech of 2002 Chrétien makes an effort to identify the impacts of 9/11 on Canada and Canada's involvement in organizations such as the United Nations.²² Keating notes, however, that, "[...] as Prime Minister he seemed to have a limited interest in these areas, a more modest view of the country's role and, not unimportantly, a strong belief in the greater importance of domestic affairs."²³ Jean Chrétien really was concerned with Canada domestic affairs, and he made no effort to hide his desires to hoist Canada out from under its massive debt, heal the national divisions, and build a new social Canada Let us now turn to each of the Throne Speeches. Analysing the Throne Speeches through a comparative lens allows us to explore the bold vision Chrétien had for Canada. It was one of restoring economic prosperity, building regional cohesiveness, and growing for the future. By comparing his Speeches in 1994 and 2002, we can see how one prime minister inherited

a nation and how he became proud of the Canada he shaped and how he believe his vision at the end of his career as Prime Minister would continue to shape the nation.

Throne Speech 1994

Context matters. To understand Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's framework and concepts of the Speech from the Throne and his Leaders' Day reply we must recall the 1994 election. The Liberal party had lost in the two previous federal elections against the Conservative Party led by Brian Mulroney.²⁴ These defeats, including the poorest showing ever by the Liberals, would make the elections of 1993 even more important as to re-establish the Liberal party's power as the governing party in Canada. Lawrence Martin once wrote, "[the] Liberals were impatient in their lust for a new leader."²⁵ Canada had been through a decade of Conservative Governments, the Liberals had been through years of defeat, and a new leader seemed to be their way to generate momentum for the 1993 election and regain power. Chrétien emerged as one of the favorite of Liberals across Canada, capturing the leadership of the Liberal Party in June 1990 and winning a majority government in 1993.

The Throne Speech of 1994 was the Liberal party's opportunity to set the tone of their government for the next four years. Critics of the 1994 Throne Speech, following the election of the Liberal party, said the speech "set modest aims".²⁶ Prior to be elected Prime Minister, Chrétien is noted to have said, "I came back into politics for one reason: I want Canada to stay together [... and]" he then added, "[...] we have become more British Columbian, more Albertan, more Québécois, and more Ontarian. This is a problem. We have to become Canadian. Otherwise we won't survive."²⁷ These ideas were echoed in his response on Leaders' Day in 1994 when he said, "We are French Canadians [...] our country is Canada."²⁸ Although national unity and the ending of the fragmentation of Canada had been priorities of Chrétien though his career in federal politics and certainly during his time as Prime Minister, these sentiments of healing a fractured Canada were not front and centre in his first Speech from the Throne. During the 1994 Speech, a view of Canada being united by a strong government was clearly the dominant narrative. The government Jean Chrétien envisioned for Canada was one that provided opportunity for Canadians to achieve their full potential, while maintaining and promoting Canadian unity.²⁹ In his response to the opposition leader on Leaders' Day in 1994, Chrétien discussed his meetings with the provincial leaders where he advocated for more open trade among the provinces.³⁰ Trade, it seems, was a means of promoting national unity.



Formal group portraits on the occasion of five former Prime Ministers attending an event at the National Archives of Canada on 24 October 1994 to launch an education kit on the theme of Canada's Prime Ministers, 24 October 1994.

Newspapers such as the *Globe and Mail* claimed that the Liberal Speech from the Throne of 1994 “set modest goals” and that it was a “repackaged version of the party’s [...] promises from the fall election campaign”.³¹ These claims were echoed by the *Leader Post* which said that, “[t]he speech read like a condensed version of the red book on policy the party used during the campaign last fall.”³² Though these comments were critical of the 1994 Throne Speech, they provided a sense of Liberal certainty that what they had campaigned on was what they plan to accomplish while holding office. The Throne Speech did not introduce new ideas to the Canadian populace about the Liberal agenda, yet it did attempt to put at ease a fractured nation. For these reasons, national unity was a primary message of Jean Chrétien’s Speech from the Throne. The speech, by tradition, was delivered by the Governor General. The Speech from the Throne of 1994 was less about the policies the Canadian government would enforce and more about Canadian identity.³³ In his short speech, Chrétien used the word “Canadian” over twenty times.³⁴

The 1994 reply to the Speech from the Throne was delivered by the Honourable Lucien Bouchard, the official leader of the opposition and leader of the Bloc Québécois, a federal political party devoted to Quebec sovereignty.³⁵ Bouchard’s Reply begins by noting that the Official Opposition was elected by the people of Quebec and new representations in Western Canada.³⁶ He then goes on to address the upcoming referendum in Quebec and the opposition’s representation of Quebecois sovereigntists. Mr. Bouchard then goes on to address the differences between Quebec and what he calls, “English Canada”.³⁷ He is clear in his response, English Canada will no longer dominate political discourse at the federal level. In some ways, his response targets Chrétien personally as Mr. Bouchard quotes General Charles de Gaulle who compared the uncertainties of longing to the truth of reality.³⁸ Jean Chrétien’s long political career meant that he had been a politician during the time when the French President Gaulle and the Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson were in dispute.³⁹ This response draws attention to what Jean Chrétien *didn’t* say in his Speech from the Throne as much as what he *did* say. The rebuttals to the Throne Speech address issues of economic

uncertainty in Canada unemployment rates, Canadian foreign affairs, federalism, Quebec-Canada dualisms, and federal spending.⁴⁰ He states, “This partnership [economic] will also extend to our work in knitting together a stronger social fabric in Canada.”⁴¹ After the Leader of the Opposition’s remarks and his comments on Canada’s dual national identity, the Prime Minister has the opportunity to respond.⁴² Jean Chrétien mentioned Quebec only when discussing the issue of Atlantic fisheries.⁴³ He did not mention French and English relationships in Canada as being divergent nor did he suggest that national unity was in peril (despite the recent defeat of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords to “bring” Quebec into the Constitution).⁴⁴ Jean Chrétien does however say that, “Our cultural heritage and our official languages are at the very core of the Canadian identity and are sources of social and economic enrichment.”⁴⁵ These words of unity paint a picture of Canada that is far from the one described by the Honourable Lucien Bouchard. It is evident in the 1994 Speech from the Throne and Leader’s Day remarks by Jean Chrétien that Canada is to be a nation united on all fronts and that discussions of Quebecois separatism was not to be on the table for discussion.

Jean Chrétien’s response to Mr. Bouchard’s reply to the Throne Speech was quite lengthy. After his congratulatory messages to the Speaker of the House and other members of Parliament, the Honourable Jean Chrétien calls Canada a, “great work in progress” indicating his vision of Canada to be one greater than the Canada left behind by the Conservative Government before him.⁴⁶ He speaks of the people in his own constituency who wish for healing in Canada – a message distinct from that delivered by Bouchard who was intent on achieving Quebec sovereignty and effectively sundering the Canadian nation.⁴⁷ The vision of a united Canada Jean Chrétien outlined in his Speech from the Throne were ones of unity yet, Bouchard’s reply to Chrétien suggests Canada is a country with clear divides. Perhaps Jean Chrétien saw his Throne Speech as a way of implementing a vision of Canada under a Liberal government that would heal the divisions through a series of new policies and approaches to governing whereas Bouchard saw Canada so mired in crisis that opting out was the only option for Quebec. Chrétien’s approach to the question of unity can be supported by his remark, “Everything we do during this Parliament will be aimed at healing the deep wounds in our country, at restoring the bonds of trust and respect between Canadians and the government.”⁴⁸ The wounds he is most likely referring to are the economic and cultural wounds in Canada. In 1994, Canada was facing an economic crisis. His vision of Canada is further outlined when he discusses how his government was dealing with Canada’s desperate economic situation. For example, the Chrétien government cut funding for the “helicopter program”, the Pearson airport, and to the appointment of more ministers.⁴⁹ These cuts showed Canadians that the government was prepared to sacrifice luxury for the benefit of Canadian taxpayers. If every day Canadians could not live in security, nor would the government.

Throne Speech 2002

In response to the 2002 Speech from the Throne, Jean Chrétien spoke in memory of Canadian politician and diplomat Ron Duhamel.⁵⁰ These remarks of remembrance initiated a conversation on Francophone representation outside of Quebec as Mr. Duhamel was Canada’s representative in La Francophonie as well as a Franco-Manitoban.⁵¹ Chrétien takes a different approach in the 2002 Leaders’ Day address as he says his Throne Speech was a way to spark meaningful debate in the House of Commons and a way for the Government to evaluate itself on how they are governing.⁵² The Speech from the Throne of 2002 was an entirely different story. With the Liberal Government as the incumbent party of nearly 9 years, the Canadian populace knew the face of Jean Chrétien well. This was not a Throne Speech directly following a federal election, nor was it a speech written by a new leader. The Throne Speech of 2002 was unique for a different reason, it was Jean Chrétien’s last Throne Speech to prove his competence as a leader. For the governing Liberal party, issues of leadership and who held the torch of authority was in the back of every member’s mind. The Liberal Government, and their affiliations, were under fire of accusations by the press and internal associates.⁵³ The 2002 Speech from the Throne was important to Chrétien and the Liberal party for reasons different from those of the 1994 Speech from the Throne. In 2002, Chrétien had something to prove, the Liberals had face to save, and North America was still feeling the devastating effects of 9/11, which occurred only one year prior.^{54:55} Jean Chrétien

reportedly promised to deliver on all his promises prior to his retirement, only a year and some months away from the 2002 Throne Speech.⁵⁶ For this reason, the Throne Speech of 2002 and the one of 1994 can be used as perfect examples of comparison. Jean Chrétien, in both speeches, wanted Canada to unite under him without a divide of language, class, or other dividing factor. To reinforce Chrétien's views of unity in Canada, he notes that the goal of the government is to "minimizing divisiveness" in order to improve Canada.⁵⁷



photo Jean-Marc Carisse

The Right Honourable Joseph Jaques Jean Chretien, the 20th Prime Minister of Canada.

The topics of Chrétien's Leaders' Day address demonstrate his pride in what his government has accomplished. He even uses the word "proud" when discussing the ways in which the Liberal party dealt with lowering taxes for Canadians.⁵⁸ All in all, Jean Chrétien wanted, so badly, for Canada to break down its barriers of separation. Chretien wanted Canadians to unite under his government, no matter if their barriers of division were those of provincial boundaries, education, class, access to resources, or culture.

Conclusion

As Prime Minister Jean Chrétien focused on Canada and fixing the perceived internal divides that he saw in Canada. Many Canadians dream of becoming Prime Minister and many certainly think they could do a better job than a sitting Prime Minister. The role of a Prime Minister, most agree, is to direct and guide Canada, speak on its behalf, and shape Canada. As Prime Minister Jean Chrétien was a nationalist. He believed in the power of unity under the Canadian flag. His foreign policies were weak and his acknowledgement of the Quebecois separatist movements was lacking, but through two Throne Speeches considered here, he stressed the importance of economic and fiscal security as a means of creating security for Canadians and he helped Canadians envision a Canada that would provide for future generations.

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7. Gone Without a Chance: Paul Martin's Vision for a Greater Canada

ALEXANDER WASHKOWSKY

Introduction

Paul Martin is one of the shortest serving prime ministers in Canadian memory. The Paul Martin administration was to many Canadians perhaps not even a fond memory as he was not even given the opportunity to serve a full term before losing the job to Stephen Harper in 2006. None the less, Martin and his administration left a lasting impact on Canada's domestic and foreign affairs, as he was a key contributor to shaping Canada's economy into what it is today. Paul Martin had a dream for Canada which he outlined through his policy and his speeches, a dream which he had to watch come to fruition as an MP and, later, outside of Parliament in his retirement. Although Paul Martin's tenure may have not been as long as that of Pierre Trudeau's, or even that of his immediate predecessor, Jean Chretien, he left a lasting legacy on Canada which will be felt through the decades. Such was the case in particular with his approach to fiscal management of the country and his dreams for a Canada that would build on the legacy of Canada as a caring nation that began with Prime Minister Mackenzie King and his own father, Paul Martin, Sr., in the 1940s.

Paul Martin Jr. was born the son of distinguished Liberal Member of Parliament, Paul Martin Sr., in Windsor, Ontario. Martin Sr. would move the family to Ottawa while Martin Jr. was still young. There, he would send his children to better their French at primary school.¹ The Martin family has always had close ties to their Francophone culture. In particular, there was a strong connection between the Martin family and the French Catholic church, which was typical of Franco-Ontarian households for the times. Faith was a key feature to the policy of Martin Sr. and, likewise, for the upbringing of Martin Jr. Growing up Martin Sr. was a devote Catholic, spending ample time at mass, and even growing up himself in a home rented from the local bishop.² These close ties to Catholicism helped shaped Martin Sr. and later the policies and outlook of his son. Perhaps more important in shaping his outlook was the fact that his father contracted polio as a child and was left unable to walk for several years.³ Young Paul sometimes campaigned at his father's side when Martin Sr. was the Minister of Health and Welfare in King's government and a strong advocate of the welfare state. Martin attended St. Michael's College, a Catholic college at the University of Toronto, where he also earned a law degree before pursuing a career in the private sector.⁴



Prime Minister Paul Martin addresses the crowd after winning the leadership vote at the Liberal party of Canada's biennial convention in Ottawa Sunday, March 6, 2005

Although Paul Martin Jr. only led the country for exceptionally short period of time, he still had a remarkable political career. Attempting to fulfil his father's lost dream of becoming Prime Minister, losing the Liberal Leadership on three separate occasions, Martin Jr became involved with Canadian politics quite early,⁵ and being the son of a well-established Liberal member of parliament the thought could not have ever truly been that distant. Paul Sr.'s memoirs have been known to show that the younger Martin was already wanting to enter Canadian politics as early at the 1970's, though he would wait until the late 80's before he did so however.⁶ With a deep-rooted political legacy, it would not be surprising to expect great things from the younger Martin. And great things he did accomplish, as he was one of longest serving finance ministers Canada has seen in a long time. Originally appointed to the role by Prime Minister Jean Chretien in 1993, Martin would hold the position until he was fired by Chretien in 2002. As finance minister, Paul Martin Jr. tackled Canada's huge deficit aggressively, balancing a budget which did not seem likely at the time. Although the policies and tactics he used to attain such a goal were often criticized, Martin led Canada's economy to substantial growth while, at the same time, dealing with unprecedented circumstances, including an exploding deficit, which could be called unfavorable at the best.

Martin as Minister of Finance

Paul Martin's vision for Canada began to take shape before he ever became Prime Minister, although his Speech from

the throne formalized it. He demonstrated his political prowess as a Liberal politician in the multiple budget speeches delivered during his time as Finance Minister in the Chretien Administration. His budget speech delivered in 2001 shortly, before his dismissal showcases what kind of country wanted to build once he deficit was under control. Though criticized immediately after delivering it by a young member of the Canadian Alliance, Jason Kenny for not being written with enough autonomy and not addressing the 'expectations' of the people⁷, Martin's budget clearly reveals, however, how he thought Canada should be moving forward. The speech was delivered at a pivotal moment in Canadian history, just two months less a day after the September 11th terrorist attacks. Paul Martin's budget speech was of immense importance that year. Along with the newfound safety concerns both domestically and internationally, 9/11 caused major disruptions in the North American economy causing a rapid decline in Canada's fiscal growth for the foreseeable future and Martin responded in such a way that won accolades from many.⁷

Martin's speech was designed to calm Canadians during those uncertain times and that is what it did. Understandably, Canada possessed the fiscal capacity to heavily spend on social programs that year because of Martin's previous budgets. The Chretien government did, however, make good on its promise to direct \$23 billion in extra funding to healthcare and education, despite enacting a \$100-billion-dollar tax cut.⁸ The main focus of Martin's budget speech was to not only maintain his path of fiscal prudence, but to reassure Canadians that the government valued health care and education, placing importance on social and economic measures during the period of considerable instability. The title of the budget speech *Securing Progress in an Uncertain World* was chosen to reflect Martin's vision for Canada which was creating a sense of stability during a period of crisis and great instability. This speech, however, might not have spoken as much to the notion of progress that Canadians might have desired but the federal budget of 2001 was Martin's way of reminding Canadians that they had to try and keep Canada stable and secure.

By 2001 the budget declared that Canada's fiscal growth had stagnated quite significantly, going from 4.4% and dropping to around 1.3%, effectively ending the last few years of economic boom.⁸ Martin was not going to let that be the end of his success, however. While serving his long tenure as finance minister he had brought stability to Canada's economy and he managed to control the burgeoning deficit and produce balanced budgets. In fiscal 2000-2001, according to his budget speech "The federal government recorded a budgetary surplus of \$17.1 billion... This [was] the largest annual surplus since Confederation and the fourth consecutive annual surplus under Martin, following surpluses of \$3.5 billion in 1997-98, \$2.9 billion in 1998-99 and \$12.3 billion in 1999-2000."⁹ For a Finance Minister who was genuinely concerned with social programming, Martin maintained that he and Chretien planned to protect Canadians during difficult times but they had to restore fiscal responsibility before they could launch much in the way of new spending initiatives. Most of the Government's priorities had shifted to defence and security after the attacks in New York and had clearly forced Martin off of his plan to invest in social policies, but even in the midst of a crisis, he was also able to add a personal piece about helping Aboriginal youth a policy to which he has shown a full commitment, both during his tenure as Finance Minister and Prime Minister, and especially after he left politics. In wake of the 9/11 attacks citizens were on edge, and Martin believed they were also looking to their government for answers on national security. Martin's speech, consequently, detailed what the government would provide, as it was of the utmost importance in his agenda to keep Canadians safe. In 2001, after several surpluses the federal government promised the largest jump in defence spending ever seen in peacetime Canada.¹⁰ There was also an overhaul of Canada's refugee systems, as the government was planning on fast tracking 'those who don't belong.'¹⁰



President George W. Bush and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin respond to questions from the press corps in the Rose Garden after a meeting at the White House, 30 April 2004.

Before becoming Prime minister, and actually being able to be ‘in charge’, Paul Martin would have to transition from Liberal Minister of Finance to Liberal leader. The prospect of becoming Prime minister was never far from Martin’s mind. His father had lost several bids for Liberal leadership and the role of Prime minister,¹¹ so when the chance for the younger Martin arrived, he wanted it desperately and, perhaps, too desperately. He had lost the race against Chretien in his initial bid for leadership in 1990, and although he was mostly a loyal minister in Chretien’s government, there was no doubt he had aspirations of stepping in the top job. His supporters worked tirelessly to build his support across Canada. Even so, Martin would never have formally resigned from his role as Minister of Finance to pursue his dream of becoming the next Prime Minister. Jean Chretien would make that decision for him, however. Despite the growing animosity between the two, Martin apparently wanted to remain apart of Chretien’s cabinet. There had been a growing divide in the party between the two, however, and the eventual consequences of this rift led to the end of Paul Martin’s service as the longest serving finance minister in the postwar period.¹² In 2002, he was replaced by Chretien and finally given the opportunity to try and become next Prime Minister of Canada.

It was perhaps a propitious development in the wake of the Sponsorship Scandal and the revelation of a level of corruption in the Liberal government and led, in part, to Chretien’s own resignation. Martin finally had a chance to fulfill his dream. He easily won the leadership of the Liberal party, being named Liberal leader in November although he would have to wait until December 2003 to assume the office of Prime Minister. Martin finally had the helm of the nation and had the chance to enact some of policies in which he believed. He was the ideal bi-cultural and bilingual leader and coupled with an impressive resume, Paul Martin was a logical choice for who would lead Canada towards a great future.⁹

Martin As Prime Minister

Despite the Liberal party’s transition to a more left-leaning orientation, Paul Martin would always stay somewhere close to the centre than left. This can be shown in Martin’s 2006 election platform where, some have commented, “every issue was a priority as the party tried to be all things to all people” Likewise, while defending his Throne Speech in parliament he would go on to say “[o]urs is an ambitious approach but it is as well responsible and balanced. We

are moving neither right nor left but in the direction that Canadians demand; we are moving forward.” This statement highlights his mindset of doing what he believed in, which did not always line up with the viewpoints of his party. Though often criticized for his policies, he did try and reach all Canadians, but such a strategy is, unfortunately, impossible and it resulted in his administration appearing as if it did not know how to sit priorities. His Saskatchewan-born advisor, David Herle would later say “We felt that there was a tremendous desire for change in the country... (but polls show) Canadians were not fundamentally dissatisfied with our policies.”¹³

In 2003, Martin finally had the autonomy he sought as he became Prime Minister. Unlike his budget speeches made in the past, the Speech from the Throne gave him the opportunity to finally lay out his vision for Canada and attempt to enact the policies for which he had long advocated. Yet, he would have precious little time to achieve his objectives. Martin would not last four years as the leader of Canada. This was not entirely his fault, however. The country had seen steady and gradual economic decline over the last few years of Chretien's administration. Further, the Liberal party was suffering gravely from the ongoing Sponsorship Scandal. To deal with the growing issues over allegation of Liberal party corruption over federal advertising in Quebec, Martin attempted to deflect criticism of himself and his government by establishing the Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities, known as the Gomery Commission after its chair, Justice John Gomery. The commission was to investigate his own party for evidence of corruption. This scandal became more damaging than initially anticipated and while Martin was clear from charges himself, his former boss and Prime Minister, Jean Chretien was criticized by Justice Gomery for his ‘carelessness’, if nothing else.¹⁴ The Commission reflected poorly on Martin himself and the whole Liberal party. Martin was placed in a very vulnerable predicament and he was forced to defend the Liberal record. It all placed him in an uphill battle against a young, vibrant Stephen Harper whose Conservative party focused relentlessly on charges of Liberal corruption and the misuse of public funds. Moreover, the Liberals had been in power for nearly thirteen years at this point and they were becoming a tired administration. Many Canadians were suffering from political weariness after so long under the same government.¹⁵ Martin also did not help himself in cleaning up his own public image.

For Martin, this meant that he never truly got to achieve what he wanted. His Throne speech outlined what he wanted to build in Canada, and it signaled that the state was determined to play a new role in Canadian society after several years of fiscal restraint and cuts to the civil service and federal programs. His father's focus on healthcare became a priority which he embraced. In wake of the SARS and the avian flu epidemics, Martin sought to calm Canadians fears once again. This included a lump sum of \$2 billion being directed towards healthcare, Martin also created the of the Public Health agency of Canada.¹⁶ It proved to be a key institution for Canada in battling infectious diseases arriving in the country, and directly improving the Canadian response to diseases such as Swine flu and much later COVID-19. Although he succeeded in improving Canada's health system, he would not last in political office to see it officially come to past. This must have been bittersweet for Martin to watch.



Prime Minister Paul Martin meeting with representatives at the University of Regina, 2005.

Martin's commitment to building better relationship with Indigenous Canadians was also shown in his Throne Speech. Mirroring the incentives of his own foundation to which he would devote considerable time and energy later, Prime Minister Martin demonstrates the importance of that relationship, building and attempting to create a more equitable society for Indigenous Canadians. Most of Martin's policy was projected at long term development, and in particular, it was aimed at economic stability.¹⁷ Like his final budget speech, Paul Martin sought in his Throne Speech to simply improve the status quo that already existed in Canada. Martin and Chretien had managed to balance the budget after Brian Mulroney's messy departure, and they did so through massive tax cuts, and reductions to the public sector for nearly a decade but now Martin wanted a new and different approach.²⁰ During the Address in Reply to his motion on the Throne Speech it was clear that Martin's legacy of cuts would not be forgotten as Grant Hill, the acting Leader of the Opposition, told Parliament "[t]he real story here is the \$25 billion the Prime Minister cut as finance minister, not the \$2 billion he is grudgingly giving back."¹⁸ What is important to note, however, is that the fiscal situation that Martin inherited in 1994, and the issues faced over his early years in Parliament. Without the cuts he implemented, balancing Canada's budget could have proven an even more difficult task. He returned Canada to the era of the balanced budget but before he could implement his plans for a new Canada that built on the legacy of previous Liberal governments of social policy innovation, he was defeated in a general election.

Paul Martin may be the Prime Minister who empathized most with Canada's Indigenous people and he has spent much of his retirement working towards equity through a number of programs. Most notably, the Martin Family Initiative, a program dedicated to improving educational opportunities to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children, has been very

active.¹⁹ Martin would say in a speech in 2009 to 16,000 students participating in We Day that “[w]e as Canadians cannot speak about our values abroad unless we show that we prepared to put those values to work here in Canada.”²⁰ Paul Martin has never abandoned his commitment to Indigenous people and human rights although he would always remain extremely conscious of managing prudently Canada’s budget.

Though he only served for a short time compared to some of Canada’s other Prime Ministers, his fiscal record was astounding. Paul Martin not only successfully stewarded Canada as a long-serving Finance Minister, he also reported a surplus both fiscal years while he was Prime Minister. Martin reported a surplus the entire time he was in public office.²¹ This was of no surprise, however.²² This fiscal prudence was the cornerstone of Martin’s vision, and before his death Paul Martin Sr. would say to his son “I was the father of Canada’s social revolution; you will create the country’s economic revolution.”²³ This quote must have stuck with Martin Jr. as the economy was always foremost on his mind. At times perhaps too much so. He had an obsession with decreasing the deficit which led to cuts in essential services and considerable suffering among some Canadians. Medicare in particular was struggled greatly, but due to Martin’s priority of finding fiscal security, once he had the budget back in surplus he was then keen on restoring and bolstering the social programs that had been cut.²⁴

This is not to say that social programming was completely ignored by Martin. He understood clearly that the long-term commitment could not be possible without a sound fiscal regime. Once that system was secure Martin could turn to fulfilling his social vision for Canada. He also believed in Canada’s commitment to the Kyoto Accord, as well making good on his promise to help provinces subsidize healthcare and help the fight HIV internationally, especially in Africa, even covering the costs up to a quarter of physician’s appointments.²⁵ Despite his recent commitment to social spending, he also understood only economy growth provided the foundation for social spending.²⁶ Martin said in his Throne Speech, “[the] (g)overnment of Canada is unalterably committed to fiscal prudence, as evidenced by annual balanced budgets and steady reduction in the debt relative to the size of the economy. This Government will not spend itself into deficit.”²⁷ Martin and his Liberal government were able to direct an extra 3.8% in annual spending.²⁸ Paul Martin might have been to be a progressive Liberal politician, but it was his strong economic policies which focus brought him to the centre of power in Canada. He sought to make everyone in Canada happy, he was just never given the chance to do so.

Conclusion

Paul Martin will be remembered as one of the shortest serving Prime Ministers in Canadian history, but he was able as Finance Minister to display a level of economic prowess not seen before or since. Always aiming for the leadership of the party and of the country he loved, Martin worked to create a Canada he could be proud of, a stable Canada which could succeed in any situation. Martin’s administration worked tirelessly to keep the country fiscally steady, no matter the cost, and he believed that once the fiscal affairs were in order, he could turn to other matters as his father had done. Martin had made good on the first promise, a promise of restoring fiscal balance to the nation but, unfortunately, he did not last long enough in politics to see the second part of his dreams come to fruition. Through no real fault of his own perhaps, Paul Martin lost 2006 the election, which meant watching from the sidelines quite early as others set new policies that were largely possible because he had been a good financial steward during his tenure. His legacy lives on and Canada will always remember the skill of Paul Martin’s financial strategy, and how he tried to shape the country with the surpluses he had created. Paul Martin was just getting started, but he was gone and out of office even as an MP by 2008. Paul Martin was gone without a chance to fulfill his dreams for a great Canada.

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8. Rhetoric and the Search for Security: The Canadian National Identity under Stephen Harper

BRADEN SAPARA

Introduction

Canadian identity is an amorphous concept. Many Canadians even wonder at times if there is such a thing. If so, what does it actually mean? They like to think of themselves as the true north, strong and free, an idea that is found in the national anthem. But does that characterization ring true for everyone within Canada's borders? Is there something that can accurately sum up or capture the way that Canadians feel about themselves when they think about their national identity? The answer is an unequivocal no. Canadian identity has meant different things to different people at different times throughout our history. For an Inuit person on Baffin Island, for example, the conception of Canada is vastly different from that of a new immigrant to the Prairies and is still vastly different to an Acadian family in New Brunswick, yet all are Canadian. So if the country is host to an enormous diversity of background and experience, how can we ever sum up a concept as nebulous as Canadian Identity?¹ One avenue to explore is through the rhetoric and speeches of our elected leaders.



Prime Minister Stephen Harper looks on as Governor General David Johnston delivers the Speech from the Throne in the Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Wednesday October 16, 2013.

The men and women we have elected into our highest office have had over a hundred and fifty years of practice projecting their ideals of Canada to the Canadian people. Each leader adds her/his own flavour to the mix. This essay is an examination of the themes that describe the Canadian identity during the tenure of Canada's 22nd Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. This analysis is derived from an examination of the Leader's Day address of 2004 and Speeches from the Throne presented to Parliament from the 39th to the 41st sitting. Those speeches cover many areas of policy but this paper examines especially the themes that focus on the domestic and international realms. As well, this essay pays particular attention to the uniqueness of the 2009 Speech from the Throne, a time in which Canada, as a nation, was struggling to find its way through the Global Financial Crisis. To preface, national identity has made use of the influential concept of 'imagined communities' brought to prominence by Benedict Anderson in his 1991 book of the same name. He argues that a nation is 'imagined' because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or ever hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."² In the categories that comprise this essay, major concepts will be identified as they pertain to the imagined community of Canada and how the government, led by Mr. Harper, envisioned that community.

Canada at Home

The decade that led up Mr. Harper's election was one that was characterized largely by our relationship to the United States. The North American Free Trade agreement was inked in the mid-1990s and marked a new era of economic cooperation with the United States and the intertwining of our respective economies. This new age of collaboration with the US did not extend to their military activities, however. Although the tragic events of 9/11 led to increased cooperation and coordination between Canada and the United States, especially between the airspaces and redirection of flights to waiting Canadian runways, that cooperation did not extend as far as to whom should be blamed for the events in New York. Canada's Liberal government refused to commit troops to the burgeoning war in Iraq as the invasion was not sanctioned by the United Nations. Canada's refusal to join the invasion left the relationship between George W. Bush and Jean Chrétien strained, despite Ottawa committing to support America's 'war on terror' by dispatching Canadian Forces personnel to Afghanistan.³

This existential uneasiness did not dissipate even as Canada worked with the US to increase border security and monitor what is suspected to be terror-related activities. In fact, the feelings of insecurity due to the terrorist threat continued to make life at home a bit more difficult for Canadians. Despite the fact that Canadian troops had played a leading role in Afghanistan for nearly five years by the time Mr. Harper arrived in office, there was a longing for nostalgia and the return of a more stable order domestically and abroad. That push for order came through the words of Governors General, Michaëlle Jean and David Johnston. The government mandate to be "tough on crime" made its way into six of the seven Speeches from the Throne delivered by the Governors General.⁴



Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Canada Day on Parliament Hill, 1 July 2006.

The vision of Prime Minister Harper can be seen from the first Speech from the Throne in 2006. In it, he focused on crime committed with weapons illustrating to Canadians that he aspired to have a Canada where perpetrators of violent crime would be severely punished. That year's Speech focused mostly on weapons-related violent crime, though much of the proposed legislation did not pass. It was swiftly repackaged into an omnibus bill with additional measures, including mandatory minimum sentences for first-time weapons' offenders and drug traffickers, and was to be passed in the Senate shortly after the 2007 Speech from the Throne.⁵ The bill was eventually turned into a confidence vote as the Liberal Opposition had a different view of Canada and how Canadians should be kept safe, but the motion was passed as the Liberals staged a walkout and abstained from the vote.⁶ Although dealing aggressively with crime remained a high priority for the government, it was not mentioned in the 2009 Speech. However, the thread was picked up again in 2010 in hopes of reminding the electorate before 2011's upcoming general election.

When the government returned from the second prorogation of the 40th Parliament, they had really sharpened their focus on promoting their record, seemingly very proud of the investments made, especially, into criminal defence infrastructure. Prime Minister Harper reminded Canadians of his government's willingness to "crack down on crime and ensure the safety and security of neighbourhoods and communities."⁷ They punished with one hand and consoled with the other by offering support to victims of crimes through Employment Insurance.⁸ Convinced that they had made major gains in this matter and had accomplished what they had set out to do, crime was mentioned only in passing in the Speeches from the Throne of the 41st Parliament.

In Harper's construction of the Canadian identity, law and order clearly mattered. It was an issue that occupied much of the Conservative agenda and in many ways typified more broadly the conservative ideal of justice that criminals deserve severe punishments. However, it was not at all clear whether or not such attention accurately reflected the overall ideals of Canadians. Perhaps to avoid debate on its various components the *Tackling Violent Crime Act* was an omnibus bill and, despite its size and scope of the issues included, there was limited opportunity for it to be scrutinized by parliamentarians during the debate in the House of Commons. Even though many argued that violent crimes were actually declining in Canada which prompted some to question the necessity of the legislation, the bill was enacted into law largely because of the political tactics adopted by Mr. Harper.⁹ With its passage – and the rhetoric that Mr. Harper devoted to the issue – it was clear that he wanted his 'tough on crime' message and the notion that crime would be punished to be given a prominent role in his construction of Canadian identity.

Not only did Mr. Harper see security for Canadians in a more stringent and punitive criminal justice sphere but he also linked security and national identity to a more stable health system. Canada has long been proud of its universal health care system but that did not mean it was without its faults and challenges. While in opposition, the Conservatives accused Jean Chrétien's Government of dereliction in their duty towards health care. They had cut out \$25 billion from the system in 1995 as a way of dealing with the fiscal crisis of Canada's deficit.¹⁰ When Mr. Harper became prime minister, his goal was to re-establish health care services to the point where they provided not only security for Canadians but also entrenched health security as part of his new national identity for Canada. He frequently pointed out to Canadians that due to the cuts under the previous Liberal administration, citizens had "all too often, [found] themselves waiting too long for critical procedures. That is not good enough," he said. "It is time Canadians received the health care they have paid for."¹¹

Yet, the policy innovations in health funding and health care did not reflect Harper's rhetoric. Despite his initial accusations from the Leader's Day Speech in 2004 and his first Speech from the Throne, the mention of health care is sparse. Health care was not a priority in either the 2007 nor 2009 Throne Speeches and it was mentioned once in 2008 and then, only insofar as the government was planning to ensure transfer payments to the provinces continued to support the system during the financial crisis. In 2010 Harper heightened his rhetoric on social spending, adamantly stating that "Balancing the books will not come at the expense of pensioners. It will not come by cutting transfer payments for health care and education or by raising taxes on hard-working Canadians. These are simply excuses for a federal government to avoid controlling spending."¹² Despite their attempts to control spending, the government committed to an increase of the Canada Health Transfer in 2011.¹³

It would seem that despite the attention Mr. Harper put on the importance of health care in his time as Leader of the Opposition, the state of Canada's health care system played less of a role in his speeches as Prime Minister. In his first Speech from the Throne, Mr. Harper noted that Canadians "were waiting too long for critical procedures."¹⁴ By the end of his term the state of Canada's health care system and the funding Ottawa provided to support it were only mentioned in passing. In the period from 2011 to 2013, the language devoted to health care was often seen simply as a way to signal to seniors that more funding would be allocated to study dementia.¹⁵ It seemed that despite the broken promise to institute a 'patient wait times guarantee', health care was more of a way to needle the government from the opposition benches and allow the Conservatives to stake a claim to protect an important aspect of Canada's national identity.

That Conservative needle while in opposition was sharp on the Liberal handling of health care but there was no point that dug quite as deep as Mr. Harper's call for government accountability. Prime Minister Chretien and his Liberal government had been plagued with questions of corruption for years and the Conservatives led the charge, proverbial pitchforks at the ready, to restore integrity to Ottawa. Harper had led the attack on Liberal corruption first as leader of the Canadian Alliance. He resigned his seat in the House of Commons as leader of the Canadian Alliance in order to run as leader for the newly minted Conservative Party of Canada and in the wake of the Gomery Commission into the Sponsorship Scandal, Mr. Harper returned to the House of Commons as the duly elected leader of the budding party and the leader of the Official Opposition. He spoke about that purported corruption in the House of Commons:

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask if anything happened while I was away. Two years ago my first questions as Leader of the Opposition were on Liberal waste, mismanagement and corruption. Two years later,

we have no answers. Two years later, we have more Liberal waste, mismanagement and corruption. My question is simple and it is for the Prime Minister. How long until Canadians get answers to who is responsible and the truth behind this Liberal sponsorship scandal?¹⁶

When he became prime minister, Stephen Harper believed it was critical to restore government integrity as a virtue and reclaim it as an important element of the national identity. In his first Speech from the Throne, Mr. Harper introduced the *Federal Accountability Act*. It was another omnibus bill that aimed to “change the current system of oversight and management by strengthening the rules and institutions that ensure transparency and accountability...”¹⁷ Further measures were taken to convince Canadians that they could trust their elected governments. Corporate and union donations to political parties, as well as large personal donations, were eliminated and a five-year lobbying ban was introduced for political staffers working on Parliament Hill. Such measures were to “ensure that positions of public trust cannot be used as stepping stones to private lobbying.”¹⁸

It could be argued that the bans on donations and lobbying of elected officials and senior civil servants were, in essence, to protect and enhance Canada’s democracy and its public institutions. Analogously, Mr. Harper had a burning desire to have both chambers of Parliament fit within that democratic ideal. His dogged pursuit to reform the Senate which many Canadians believed had lost its effectiveness, made an appearance in every Speech from the Throne except for the 2009 Speech. At the outset of his administration, he had declared his intent to “ensure that the Senate better reflects the democratic values of Canadians...” and in what proved to be his final Throne Speech, he pronounced “That Government continues to believe the status quo in the Senate of Canada is unacceptable. The Senate must be reformed or, as with its provincial counterparts, vanish.”¹⁹ Canada was founded as a democratic country and, as such, the ideals of democratic rule permeate the Canadian national identity. Mr. Harper sought to have a consistent democracy through all levels as commensurate with Canadian standards.

In a similar vein to his handling of health care, Mr. Harper seemed far less interested in adequately addressing accountability once he came into government than he had from the opposition benches. In fact, government accountability was only mentioned twice after the first Throne Speech; once in 2008 and again in 2013. Although the government was intent on holding others to account for their actions and missteps, including young offenders accused of serious crimes, food producers, and railway shippers, Harper’s actions on accountability of parliamentarians and public officials was mostly rhetoric.²⁰

Mr. Harper was reluctant to publicly hold his own government to the level of accountability he demanded from the opposition benches. This reluctance was telling. As with most political leaders, Mr. Harper was indignant while Opposition Leader toward what he considered Liberal corruption and abuse of office but when he assumed power he was more content to resort to rhetorical flourishes rather than the implementation of policy to deal with the matter. He may have argued that all requirements were met by his *Federal Accountability Act* but his actions left more to be desired. Had government accountability really been a priority rather than a talking point, his government would have put much more work into addressing the concerns of civil servants and government scientists rather than having them muzzled under threat of termination.²¹ Instead, his priorities lay in ‘tax relief’ and ‘cutting red tape.’

Mr. Harper also wanted Canadians to believe that sound fiscal management was essential not only for the operation of the government but also essential to the national identity. Canadians, in Mr. Harper’s estimation, believed in fiscal fidelity. Mr. Harper inherited a stable financial footing from the previous government’s decade of fiscal management and their fiscal restraint. Even then, however, he badgered the government from the opposition benches and demanded “tax cuts across the board on investment, on consumption, on high marginal earners, on everyone.”²² When he gained the Prime Ministership, his government amended the *Income Tax Act* and reduced the Goods and Services Tax by one percent initially with another one percent reduction made in 2008. They spent the remaining seven years of their mandates reminding Canadians in every subsequent Speech from the Throne, save 2009 after the severe financial crisis, that his government was responsible for their ‘lower tax burden.’ They claimed that taxes were lowered to aid international competition, to spur growth of Canadian businesses and to relieve Canadians of some financial burden.²³ A low-tax environment was an essential element of Mr. Harper’s national identity.



The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada and the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, officially welcome foreign heads of state and heads of Government to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games February 12 at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver.

The lowering of tax rates was meant to streamline the economy. Mr. Harper's vision of Canadian national identity included industrious Canadians owning and operating many thriving small businesses. His strategy to achieve that was to reduce the tax burden and increase efficiency by lessening government regulations – cutting red tape. Mr. Harper expressed concern over federal red tape causing “unacceptable delays in getting access to life-saving drugs.”²⁴ In Mr. Harper's appraisal, good government meant that meeting the needs of citizens and institutions was paramount. He viewed the bureaucratic apparatus as cumbersome and in need of a trimming. A suite of regulations and the civil servants enforcing them were cut in an effort to create efficiencies.²⁵ His attempt to streamline government processes extended to the mining and resource sector by “providing a single window for major project approvals” and to the Public Service where emphasis was placed on it being “lean, competent and committed (emphasis added).”²⁶

In examining Mr. Harper's words as relayed by the Governor General, one can see that the picture he paints of the Canadian identity is one of a dynamic and competitive country where capable people need a less burdensome government. It is a picture where a Canadian is portrayed as someone who gets what they ask for. Whether they are asking for their government to be accountable, for their health care system to be responsive or a young offender for a stiff mandatory minimum, all you need to do is ask.

Canada Abroad

As was mentioned above, Prime Minister Harper wanted to reconstruct Canadians' sense of national identity in international affairs as well as in domestic policy. Canada's mission in Afghanistan had been underway for nearly five years prior to Mr. Harper taking office. Harper was a strong proponent of Canada's engagement with its allies in international action. His commitment to aiding the British and American forces in the lead up to the war in Iraq was not shared by the Liberal Government. Canadian popular opinion also favoured a different direction to his but he remained dedicated to working with Canada's traditional allies.²⁷ Not surprisingly, the encouragement and acknowledgement of Canada's military played a central role in each Speech from the Throne, except 2009. Mr. Harper promised support for a "stronger military" through a process that would lead to a modernization in its training and equipment.²⁸ His promise of better procurement of military hardware and eliminating any delay of purchase or delivery fit well with his vision of streamlined government processes.

By 2011, as the military mission in Afghanistan was nearing its end and Harper insisted that Canada had fulfilled the original commitment made to Parliament, his rhetoric shifted from what the military needed to fulfill Canada's ambitions internationally to what the members of the military had given in sacrifice to protect freedom and liberty around the world (in Harper's view). Their acknowledged efforts had prevented Kandahar province from being retaken by the Taliban.²⁹ Additionally during this time, Canadian Forces were called upon to give aid to Haiti and assist with reconstruction after the country's devastating earthquake in early 2010.³⁰



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and US President Barack Obama chat in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington September 16, 2009.

On another front, the state of the relationship between the US and Canada in regards to military cooperation had deteriorated considerably. It was an open secret that Prime Minister Jean Chrétien did not see eye to eye with President George W. Bush in terms of foreign policy and national defence.³¹ Mr. Harper viewed this an unacceptable state of affairs. The lapse of the international relationship was something which did not fit within his view of Canadian

national identity. Harper believed that Canada's 13-year commitment to Afghanistan had re-established the importance of Canada's military to its national identity. Moreover, the Afghan mission had made it clear to the world that Canada was determined to play a major role on the international stage not only rhetorically but by engaging in a very real way when military action was required to bring peace to troubled regions. During his final Throne Speech, Mr. Harper had the Right Honourable David Johnson read:

Consider this: we are honourable. People of peace, we use our military power sparingly; but when we do so we do so with full conviction, gathering our forces as men and women who believe that the freedoms we enjoy cannot be taken from us. This clarity focuses our might in terrible times. And wherever and whenever we unleash that might, we raise our grateful voices and our prayers to honour those who have stood in harm's way for us.³²

Harper took great pride in reclaiming an international role for Canada and he liked to point out that during his tenure Canada became a shining example that other countries should look to emulate. "Like the North Star, Canada has been a guide to other nations; through difficult times, Canada has shone as an example of what a people joined in common purpose can achieve."³³

Harper's embrace of the Armed Forces was not so much one of reverence but of pragmatism. His use of the military was done so prudently to recapture the ideals of peacekeeping first set out by Lester Pearson and the Louis St. Laurent Liberals in the 1950s and 1960s. The idea of Canada using its relative stature in the world not to start armed conflicts but to mediate and provide a calming presence on the international stage is one to which Canadians like to cling and Harper understood that well. It reinforced the national narrative that even though Canada is a middle power, it knows how to use its international reputation to provide a value to the world and a sense of value to Canadians themselves.

2009 Speech from the Throne

Many of the themes present in every other Speech from the Throne were absent during the '09 address. This is due to the zeitgeist of the times. Canada was in the middle of weathering the Global Financial Crisis. As such, the singular rhetorical theme is 'unprecedented economic uncertainty'.³⁴ In a time as grave as that one felt, the Canadian people were looking for a leader who could chart a course through a storm. Mr. Harper's words called upon citizens to remember their shared history and stand in solidarity with one another while the government adapted to the crisis. He emphasized that the government was consulting with job creators and non-profit sectors as well as municipal, provincial, territorial and aboriginal governments to build cooperation to navigate the impasse.³⁵ The proposed stimulus was to support key industries, stabilize the financial system and protect the vulnerable. It played into the narrative of Canada as a caring society where all should flourish despite the difficult economic circumstances.

During that period of economic upheaval, Mr. Harper wanted to show that the steady and calming hand of a competent leader was something that Canada and Canadians sorely needed. The 2009 Throne Speech used metaphor to call for calm and cooperation – two attributes that fit firmly within the idea of a Canadian national identity. Canadians are not liable to act out of turn and their stereotypical politeness is synonymous with the calm required to weather any storm, physical or financial, and Harper understood that. The spirit of cooperation additionally plays deeply within Harper's national context as the founding myths of the imagined community revolve around the give-and-take of colonial fur traders to First Nations and the interprovincial collaboration necessary to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Mr. Harper appealed to the collective memory of Canadians to remind them that they had the capacity to work together.

Conclusion

Stephen Harper was a calculating politician. The words that constituted his Speeches from the Throne were carefully chosen to elicit particular responses from the electorate. They signaled leadership to the country in times of uncertainty. They called for unity across the nation to weather the storm and make it through the financial crisis. His words were instrumental in crafting policy that shaped the Canadian identity and how Canadians think of themselves as Canadians. He added to the discourse in terms of the public appetite for government transparency, increased democratic participation, a more favourable environment to do business and a shining example of what other nations could achieve should they choose to live by the same values that make up the Canadian national identity. Harper's approach to the question of national identity was reflected in his concession speech after the general election of October 2015. Despite being a thorn in the side of the Liberal government during his days as opposition leader and presiding over the his caucus with an authoritarian bend, he remained not only humble in defeat but confident that he had done his part to refurbish a new national identity:

"I wish to address all Canadians. Laureen and I have embraced public life because we believe that Canadians that are working hard should keep more of the money they earn because we believe that government should manage the people's money the way that they manage their own. Because, because, friends we believe that in a dangerous world, Canada must without apology advance our values and our interests, and stand by our friends...We put everything on the table, we gave everything we have to give, and we have no regrets whatsoever. Friends, how could we? We remain citizens of the best country on Earth."³⁶

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9. Contributors

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Alexander Washkowsky is a senior level Education student at the University of Regina, focusing his studies on Canadian history. After graduation he plans to teach throughout Canada. He is very excited about his research on Paul Martin which is included in this book.

Deklen C. Wolbaum is currently an undergraduate at the University of Regina pursuing an HHonours degree in history. His areas of interest include analyzing the search for the Canadian identity and the ancient world. He hopes to pursue a Master's degree in the near future.