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The Interests of English Canada

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Queen's Economics Department Working Paper No. 889

The Interests of English Canada

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DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 889

THE INTERESTS OF ENGLISH CANADA

by

Dan USHER, Queen's University, Kingston, Ont

The Interests of English Canada

The Lansdown Lecture, Economics Department,

The University of Victoria, October 6, 1993

Dan Usher

Abstract

Recognition of conflicts of interest between French Canadians in Quebec and English Canadians in the rest of Canada is a necessary first step in the evaluation of proposals from Quebec for the reform of the Canadian constitution, as well as for the design of institutions for an entirely English-speaking country in the event that Quebec secedes. Interests differ about the scope of bilingualism, public recognition of cultural diversity and the division of powers between Federal and provincial governments. The probability of the separation of Quebec and the potential harm to English Canadians from the retention of the Canadian constitution as it stands would seem large enough to warrant debate now among English Canadians about the appropriate form of government for a new English Canadian country.

The Interests of English Canada

The Lansdowne Lecture, Economics Department,

The University of Victoria, October 6, 1993

Dan Usher

My purpose this evening is to articulate the common interests of English Canadians in response to what I see as a significant chance that Quebec will become independent in the next five to ten years or that English Canada will once again be confronted with a major demand for constitutional reform as in the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords. Like it or not, we may be obliged to reconstruct what remains of our country in the wake of the separation of Quebec as a *fait accompli*. Or the threat of separation may once again back demands for change to the Canadian constitution, forcing us to decide whether proposed new arrangements would be better or worse for us than a break-up of the country and whether English Canada would preserve for itself an acceptable share of the advantages of a country from sea to sea. In neither case can we be expected to act reasonably without a clear perception of who we are and where our interests lie.

I intend to show, as best I can, how the interests of English Canada might play out in a reconstruction of our country, and to develop the argument that, since Canada as we know it is a compromise between French and English, the appropriate institutions for a Canada without Quebec might be very different from the institutions in Canada today. I have my own, some would say eccentric, views about the appropriate institutions for an English Canadian country, but it is not my primary purpose to persuade you that these views are correct. Rather I hope to persuade you that the choice of

institutions is sufficiently problematic to warrant extensive consideration by English Canadians today, while there is still time to think, discuss and plan. We dare not wait for the moment of crisis when Quebec actually chooses to go. In saying this, I am not asserting that the break-up of Canada is inevitable. I am saying that the risk of separation is too high, and the consequences for English Canada of finding itself unprepared are too grave, to be ignored.

Before attempting to articulate the interests of English Canada, I should specify what I mean by an English Canadian. The "English" in the context of the Canadian constitutional debate are Canadians who prefer to speak English rather than French in dealings with government, in commerce and in all other contacts with the public at large. An English Canadian, as I am using the term, is not identified by his ancestry or even by the language he prefers to speak at home, but by the language he prefers to speak with the great majority of his fellow Canadians. He, his parents or his grandparents may have may have immigrated to Canada from the British Isles, but he may equally-well have immigrated from Poland, China, Italy, Portugal, Ukraine, India, Greece or any of a hundred other countries. He is an English Canadian all the same. He is an English Canadian by virtue of his preference for English "in public". However, for the purposes of this talk, I am concerned primarily with the English outside of Quebec. To be sure the English in Quebec are English-speaking, and to be sure they are Canadian, but they have interests apart from the interests of English Canadians elsewhere in Canada, and it is these latter interests primarily that I am attempting to articulate. What I have to say about the interests of English Canadians applies to a lesser degree to the English in Quebec.

What then are the interests of English Canada?

The first and most obvious interest of English Canada is language: a preference for speaking English rather than French in dealings with the public sector. From this it follows at once that bilingualism - in the peculiar Canadian sense of the term as the joint and more or less equal use of French and English in Federal institutions and elsewhere - is for English Canadians a cost of Confederation. Bilingualism is a part of the fundamental Canadian compromise without which Quebec would surely be better off as a separate and independent country. But a fundamental compromise is a compromise none the less, and it entails a burden that should only be borne if, and in so far as, the burden is outweighed by the advantages of living in a united Canada. For English Canadians, bilingualism entails a cost of learning French and a cost of not learning French. It is a cost to those English Canadians, many of whose ancestral languages are neither English nor French, who must devote, give or take, a year of their lives to learning French as a condition for advancement in the Federal government or for dealing with the Federal government in an increasingly wide range of activities. It is a cost to those English Canadians who forgo job-opportunities and contacts with the Federal government by not learning French well.

These costs may seem symmetrical between French and English Canada, but they are not. Detach Quebec from Canada, and educated French Canadians will still have to learn English by virtue of Quebec's location in North America and the importance of English in the World. Detach English Canada from Quebec, and the educated English Canadian need never hear a word of French again. Thus, the balance to English Canadians of the costs and benefits of learning French is materially affected by the risk of the separation of Quebec. For an English Canadian, the cost of learning French is sunk, once

and for all, regardless of what Quebec chooses to do, but the benefit is contingent, for one cannot trade in one's French for Russian, Spanish or Chinese if Quebec chooses to go.

The scope of bilingualism - the number of bilingual posts in the army, the judiciary and the civil service, and the extent to which a knowledge of French is advantageous, or even necessary, in the legal profession - will always be a source of contention, for the English too large, and for the French too small. A completely bilingual Canada is out of the question because, to a majority of English Canadians, the cost of learning French - in many instances instead of some other language which might be one's ancestral language or might be more useful in commerce - is probably greater than the over-all benefit of living in a Canada that includes Quebec. At the same time, bilingualism may be divisive within English Canada as there emerges a class of people who have learned French, are enjoying the rewards of knowing both languages and are inclined to be accommodating to Quebec.

Most English Canadians are attached to English differently than most French Canadians are attached to French. For French Canadians, French is the ancestral language, brought to Quebec by the first settlers, spoken in the old country since time out of mind and endangered by the great predominance of English in North America. By contrast, English is not the ancestral language of most English Canadians, and, as the international language of commerce and diplomacy, can hardly be said to be threatened on a global scale. For most English Canadians, English is the adopted language which has replaced the ancestral language, one, two or three generations ago. English, above all, is the bond that enables a socially, racially and ethnically diverse people to live and work peacefully together. While it is certainly understandable that French Canadians would rather separate from Canada than

give up French, it is equally understandable that people who have lost ancestral languages on immigrating to Canada may be less than enthusiastic at having to pay a stiff price to enable French Canadians to preserve theirs.

A second interest of English Canada is in individual rights, as distinct from group rights. English Canada is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, as one can see in five minutes on any street in Vancouver. This does not imply, as one might incautiously suppose, that every group should be publicly recognized and cherished. It implies that no group should be officially recognized and that a clear line should be drawn between the public and the private realms. In the private realm, one may be as culturally and as ethnically distinct as one pleases. One can practice what religion one pleases, join what groups one pleases and associate in any mutually-acceptable way with others of the same linguistic, ethnic or even racial characteristics. (for how else could there be a Chinese Association?) But, however diverse English Canadians may be in private, they are alike in public in that they speak a common language, are equal before the law and relate to the government as individuals rather than as members of groups. Ethnicity and cultural diversity are ignored in the public realm in the belief that a certain blindness is required for living peacefully together. If the watchword in Quebec is "Je me souviens.", the watchword in English Canada must be "Je ne me souviens pas." There can be no Pole-privileges, or Jew-privilege or Brit-privileges, just as there can be no Pole-tax or Jew-tax or Brit-tax. Once government is prepared to support or to penalize this or that group, there is no principle specifying each group's entitlement and, sooner or later, each group becomes the rival of every other in a general scramble for public largesse. Multiculturalism is the enemy of a multicultural society.

There is a natural tendency for public protection of culture in French Canada to provoke demands for similar treatment of other cultural groups elsewhere. If the language and culture of French Canadians is to be specially protected, then why should not the languages and cultures of Ukrainian, Portuguese or Punjabi Canadians be protected too? How much weight should be given to the fact that French Canadians expropriated Indians first? If the French conquest of the Indians is to convey political rights, so too presumably should the English conquest of New France and the historical priority of the United Empire Loyalists over recent immigrants of non-English descent, on a principle which, if adopted, would destroy English Canadian society completely.

It is with these considerations in mind that one must understand the instinctive discomfort of most English Canadians at the "distinct society" clauses of the Meech Lake and Charlettetown Accords. There is no denying that Quebec is distinct from English Canada in salient respects, just as the Italian community is distinct from many other communities. Quebec is distinct in that it is more different from any other province than any other two provinces are different from one another. But "distinctiveness in fact" is no justification for constitutionally-mandated "distinctiveness in status" such as the Meech and Charlottetown Accords would have introduced. Quite the contrary, harmony within English Canada requires that the genuine distinctiveness of sub-groups of English Canadians is not officially recognized. It is because English Canadians are distinct from one another in fact that we so fear distinctiveness of rights and privileges.

The contrast between distinctiveness in fact and distinctiveness of status is placed in sharp relief by an imaginary rewriting of the distinct society clause in the Meech Lake Accord. Note that distinctiveness is

grammatically transitive. If dogs are distinct from cats, than cats must be distinct from dogs. If Quebec is distinct from English Canada, then English Canada must be distinct from Quebec. Thus it should make no difference to the literal meaning of the distinct society clause if "English Canada" rather than "Quebec" were decreed to be distinct.

Here is a condensation of the distinct society clause in the Meech Lake Accord:

The Constitution of Canada shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with.....the recognition that Quebec constitutes within Canada a distinct society.

The substitution would read

The constitution of Canada shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with....the recognition that English Canada constitutes within Canada a distinct society.

If words in the constitution meant what they said, those who favour the original version would have no cause to object to the substitution or to be less content with the revised version than with the original.

Would Quebec be content with the change? Of course not. For "distinct" in the newspeak of Canadian political discourse is code for privilege, a way of referring to privilege without actually using the word. Constitutions are about rights, not facts. Transitivity of meaning in this context does not imply transitivity of effect, for, as a distinct society clause is likely to be interpreted by the Supreme Court, it would supply Quebec with yet-to-be-specified rights that the rest of Canada will not share. Might contracts with the government of Quebec be restricted to firms where the working language is French? Might products not made by French-speaking workers be excluded from the Quebec market? Might a distinct society require

that a larger proportion of Canadian investment and of head offices of Canadian firms be located in Quebec than the market would otherwise provide? Might a substantial proportion of the benefits to English Canadians from living and working in a country that includes Quebec - rather than beside an independent country of Quebec - be eaten away as the province becomes more exclusive and distinct? Perhaps not. But if not, one wonders what the fuss over the distinct society clause was all about. Grubby economist that I am, I cannot bring myself to believe that the great debate about words was, in the end, just about words.

If and in so far as the distinct society clause is really about privileges, its inclusion in the Canadian constitution would be a constant source of friction over what those privileges should be and would embitter French-English relations for many years to come. In particular, politics would focus increasingly on the Supreme Court, and the authority to appoint Supreme Court judges would convey the right to specify the privileges that the distinct society clause conveys. It is for this reason that I was disturbed by the proposal in the Meech Lake and Charlettetown Accords for provincial input to the appointment of the judges of the Supreme Court. The proposal was a) that the Federal government would choose judges from lists submitted by the provinces, b) that the province of Quebec would have the exclusive right to nominate three of the nine judges, and c) that all nine English provinces would be entitled to submit nominations to the Federal government for any of the remaining six judges. Together, these changes would enhance the influence of Quebec over the appointment of Supreme Court judges, directly through item (b) and indirectly because item (c) allows the Federal government, representing French and English together, to play off the English provinces, one against another, and thereby to exert considerably

more influence upon the choice of judges from English Canada than upon the choice of judges from Quebec.

A third interest of English Canada is shared completely with French Canada. All Canadians have an interest in coast-to-coast free trade, for one is likely to be more prosperous as a participant in a large, open market, unencumbered by tariffs or other trade barriers, than if confined to a small, protectionist state. This consideration warrants the removal of existing trade barriers among the provinces. This consideration warrants the preservation of a united Canada, but not at the cost of a substantial enhancement of the economic powers of the provinces, such as might occur in a new constitutional deal. For even within a united Canada, inter-provincial trade barriers could become so extensive and so burdensome that the advantages of free trade are lost; and inter-provincial rivalry over trade barriers - each province imposing barriers in response to the barriers of its neighbours - could provoke such animosity among the provinces that they could no longer coexist within a single country.

A fourth interest of English Canada is jurisdictional: As distinct societies within a united Canada, the French and the English have distinct interests in the division of powers between the Federal and provincial governments. As a majority in Quebec and a minority in Canada as a whole, French Canadians naturally favour strong provincial government. As a majority in Canada as a whole, English Canadians are inclined to favour a stronger Federal, as distinct from provincial, government than would be in the interest of Quebec. Strong Federal government tends to preserve Canada-wide free trade, for, the larger the scope of provincial authority, the greater the impediments to trade are likely to be. If nothing else, the scope for restrictions on purchases by provincial governments - the subject

of a current dispute among Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec - must increase with size of these governments. There is also a case for nation-wide, as distinct from province-wide, redistribution to prevent transfer-seeking and transfer-avoiding migration among provinces. This consideration might warrant Federal jurisdiction over health, education and welfare, though a good deal of authority may, in practice, be delegated to local governments. Similar to the case for Federal jurisdiction over redistribution, but different enough to be worth considering independently, is the case for a sharing community encompassing the entire country and not severed on provincial lines.

By a sharing community, I mean a group of people who enjoy some goods - though not all goods - in common. For instance, if elementary education is provided by the province of British Columbia and if education is financed by progressive or proportional taxation - virtually any tax system other than a head tax - then every person in British Columbia acquires a material interest in the prosperity of every other person in British Columbia. If you become prosperous, then your tax bill increases and the cost to me of any given quality of public education for my children declines. If and in so far as we share within Canada as a whole, we begin to identify ourselves as Canadians. If and in so far as we share within British Columbia, we begin to identify ourselves as British Columbians. In the absence of an English Canadian level of government, there can be no sharing within English Canada as a whole, though nation-wide sharing is probably sufficient. It is in the interest of English Canadians that the sharing community be nation-wide for very much the same reason it is in the interest of French Canadians that the sharing community be provincial. Both peoples want governments to reenforce cultural identity with common interests.

A degree of nation-wide sharing is a natural by-product of Federal jurisdiction over a considerable range of activities. For example, the principal rationale for Federal, rather than provincial, responsibility for unemployment insurance is to avoid inefficient, transfer-seeking interprovincial migration, the poor shopping for the most generous province and the rich shopping for the least generous, but a nation-wide sharing community is fostered all the same in so far as unemployment insurance is financed from general revenue.. Equalization payments from the Federal government to the poorer provinces also centralizes the sharing community to some extent, but by no means entirely. In particular, Equalization, as the program is carried out, entails no sharing between British Columbia and Ontario, for an increase in the average income in one of these province raises total equalization payments to the poor provinces and increases in the Federal tax bill to the residents of the other.

I see Canadian federalism - the constitutionally-sanctioned division of powers between the Federal and the provincial governments - as an ingredient of the compromise between the French and the English, but not in the interest of English Canada *per se*. Constitutionally-sanctioned provinces are essential for Canada as we know it, for, without constitutionally-sanctioned provinces, Quebec would never have agreed to join Canada and would never agree to remain. That becomes irrelevant if Quebec secedes. I am at one with Sir John A. Macdonald and most of the English Fathers of Confederation in favouring a unitary state like England or France because constitutionally-sanctioned provincial governments would be divisive and because tasks best performed locally could be delegated by the national government, just as the government of British Columbia delegates tasks to the City of Victoria. What, for example would be the rationale in a Canada

without Quebec for provincial, rather than national, jurisdiction over medical care? What biological or social difference between the people of Alberta and the people of Ontario outweighs the breaking of the nation-wide sharing community, the cost of coordination between provinces in a country with unrestricted mobility of people and the waste of effort in complex negotiation between the Federal and provincial governments over standards and financing? Or consider education which is at the very core of Quebec's concern for provincial autonomy. What differences in customs, traditions or ways of speech among the provinces of English Canada are so pronounced and so worthy to be cherished as to justify constitutional sanction for provincial jurisdiction in a country without Quebec? Would it not be in the common interest of all English Canadians to administer education nationally so as to foster a sense of unity and common purpose among the young and because nation-wide jurisdiction is efficient in a country of only nineteen million people? [Of course, a national Ministry of Education would delegate as much or as little authority to the municipalities as appears to be warranted, exactly as the provinces do today.] One can review the functions of government, one by one, without finding any for which the present territories of the provinces would seem to be the proper units of administration or for which constitutionally-sanctioned provincial jurisdiction would seem to be appropriate for an entirely English country. The rationale for federal government is to accommodate French and English interests together. Federal, as distinct from unitary, government would serve no useful purpose after Quebec secedes.

Those of you who are uncomfortable with this assessment of Canadian federalism, or who are unsure whether your own preference for a federal over a unitary state is a principled choice among institutions or mere mental

inertia in favour of things as they are, might try this conceptual experiment: Suppose the division of Canada in the nineteenth century into Upper Canada(the genesis of Ontario) and Lower Canada(the genesis of Quebec) had been preserved and extended so that Lower Canada evolved, as it did, into the present territory of Quebec and Upper Canada evolved westward into the entire territory from the Ottawa River to the Pacific Ocean (and somehow picked up the Maritime provinces as well). Canada would then consist of two provinces, one primarily English, the other primarily French. Then suppose that Quebec chose to go its own way, leaving English Canada as one provinceless country. Would you in these conditions advocate the federalization of English Canada, the division of the territory into provinces - not just administrative divisions and municipalities which would presumably be advantageous, but full-blown provinces with constitutionally-sanctioned powers? If so, what would the territories of these provinces be, and what functions could they usefully perform in which the advantages to their residents would not be at the expense of the residents of other provinces in a negative sum game that leaves most people worse off than they would otherwise be? If you would opt for provinces where there had been none, then you really are a committed federalist. Otherwise not.

The question may be posed about Quebec. If the Province of Quebec were to secede from Canada, would it be in the interest of the majority of French-speaking people in the new country of Quebec to establish a federal government with new constitutionally-sanctioned provinces? With a population larger than that of Prince Edward Island, a Province of Westmount might establish its own sign law to protect the English language as Bill 101 protects French. Desirable as that may be for the people of Westmount, I

doubt whether the French-speaking majority in Quebec would allow it. In their circumstances, I would not do so. Alternatively, if by some mischance, British Columbia found itself detached from Canada as an independent country, would you advocate the creation of provinces within British Columbia: Klondike, Vancouver Island, Metropolitania, Okanagan and so on, each with its own constitutionally-sanctioned powers over, for instance, health care, roads and education?

The fifth and last interest of English Canadians is political. English Canadians share with French Canadians a common interest in keeping Canada whole because, despite all our squabbles, Canada has for over a hundred years maintained a standard of prosperity, public order and individual liberty that has been the envy of most of the world. We must not be too sanguine about these virtues. Canada has been so prosperous, so democratic and so peaceful for so long that it is difficult for us to appreciate that prosperity, peace and democracy might ultimately be at stake. The separation of Quebec may not matter much to the average English Canadian - there may even be some benefit in the recovery of the other side of the corn flakes box and all that that implies - if the transition is amicable, if free trade can be established with Quebec, as it is with the United States, and if our democratic institutions can be preserved. But we have no real assurance that these conditions can be maintained. States often go sour. New countries are especially vulnerable. Neither English Canada nor Quebec is guaranteed immunity from the break-down of democracy experienced in many Latin American countries that are as well-endowed as Canada with natural resources and talented people. Nor, however, can we be sure about the long-term consequences for a united Canada of our perennial bickering and constitution-mongering, or about the consequences of the weakening of the

federation in a new constitutional deal.

Let us not fool ourselves. Good government is not written into the English Canadian genes. It must be inherited or designed, and it may be chucked away by ill-conceived economic, social or constitutional tinkering. It might be lost thoughtlessly in an attempt to placate Quebec. It might be lost in the aftermath of Quebec separation, especially if English Canadians are unable to act collectively. It might best be preserved if Canada holds together, but the temperature of conflict between French and English may rise to the point where both groups are better off apart. Alas, to the most important question in the entire constitutional debate, I can supply no answer except to repeat the usual scholar's shibboleth that we are best off in the long run when interests are articulated and when difficulties on the horizon are identified as quickly as possible.

To summarize, I see five principal interests of English Canada, some shared with Quebec, some not:

i)The use of English in public, with bilingualism as a cost of Confederation.

ii)A clear line of division between public and private sectors, with no ethnic or communal rights.

iii)Coast-to-coast free trade.

iv)Strong central, as distinct from provincial, government, especially in the event of the separation of Quebec.

v)The Canadian tradition of civility, freedom and democratic government, a tradition shared by all Canadians, French and English alike.

How do these interests play out in our Canadian constitutional conflict? To discuss this question, one must site the interests of English Canada against a background of our circumstances, the essential features of which

are these: that Quebec can detach itself from the rest of Canada if it chooses to do so, that there is a significant chance that Quebec will go, that, within a united Canada, our interests are and should be compromised to some extent, that English Canada may be manoeuvred into a new constitutional compromise which is worse for us than the break up of the country, that there is no English Canadian government-in-embryo to take over if Quebec secedes, and that the appropriate constitution for an English Canadian successor country might be very different from the Canadian constitution today.

That Quebec can separate follows immediately from the unwillingness of English Canada to go to war to hold Canada together. It would not be in the interest of English Canada to fight to preserve the Union as the United States did in its great Civil War. I would not wish to do so, and I believe the overwhelming majority of English Canadians would not wish to do so either, in part to avoid bloodshed but primarily because an ostensibly united Canada that had to be held together by force imposed upon a substantial minority of its citizens would be very different from the Canada we know today and would almost certainly be a worse place to live than the countries that the French and the English could build for themselves apart. Whatever the advantages, to French and English alike, of living in one continent-wide country, those advantages would be lost if unity had to be imposed upon a government of Quebec that was determined to secede. Fortunately, there appears to be an understanding in Canada that if a government in Quebec hauls down the Canadian flag, raises the fleur de lys and decrees Quebec to be a separate and independent country, then Quebec will henceforth be a separate and independent country. It would help if there were warrant for independence in a referendum or an election, but that may not be necessary. This understanding has for all practical purposes the force of a clause in

the Canadian constitution.

That Quebec may choose to separate is obvious to anyone who has followed Canadian politics over the last decade. I would remind you that, at this time last year, the Prime Minister and his successor were both threatening English Canada with the dissolution of the country if the Charlottetown Accord were rejected. For what it is worth, I would place the probability of separation at about a third over the next five to ten years, a risk far too large to ignore. Inevitably, this climate of impermanence is conducive to mistrust among Canadians, for groups that may belong to separate countries tomorrow are already separate in some sense today. The pronoun in "maitre chez nous" is, alas, contagious. You may have noticed that I have been referring to English Canadians as "we". I do so deliberately because I want words to reflect facts, but I do so with some regret.

That Canada as we know it is a compromise has been a staple of every high school civics course for the last hundred years and has been taken for granted in this talk. Confederation is often spoken of as a compact in which the English and the French accommodate to one another in order to enjoy the common advantages of living together within a united country. The compromise has over the years been mutually-advantageous, but there are enough disadvantages - in the use of French, in greater decentralization than most English Canadians would prefer and in our constant bickering with Quebec - that English Canada is quite close to the margin where the separation of Quebec becomes preferable to additional constitutional concession. I think English Canadians were right to reject the Charlottetown Accord, regardless of the response from Quebec.

That English Canada may be manoeuvred into a new constitutional compromise which would be worse for us than the splitting up of the country

is a risk that depends very much on how we behave from now on. Indeed, it is a virtual certainty if English Canadians, who will not actually go to war to hold the country together, continue to proclaim that the break up of Canada is unthinkable, telling Quebec, in effect, that English Canada cannot stand firm if demands from Quebec are backed by a threat of separation. We may be spooked by the threat of separation, or led absent-mindedly by politicians whose interests may not coincide with the interests of English Canada as a whole, into unsatisfactory constitutional arrangements. Our defense against this danger is a clear perception of our interests as a touchstone for the evaluation of proposals for constitutional change.

That there is no English Canadian government-in-embryo is an unintended consequence of the political history of Canada in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. History has played us a cruel trick. For administrative reasons in an age without automobiles or telephones, English Canada was divided among nine provinces with no social or economic basis that is of any relevance today. English Canadians have distinct interests in common, but these interests may be inadequately represented in the political arena. The Federal government represents, as it should, the interests of French and English together. Each provincial government, as the representative of a part of the whole, has a built-in incentive to foster the cohesion of the people within its territory and to augment its own authority and prestige. Canada is not like Belgium or Czechoslovakia with regional governments that can be upgraded into national governments the event of a split. By accident rather than by design, we find ourselves adrift with no single, undisputed representative of the interests of English Canada as a whole.

English Canada is one people divided by nine provinces, each with its

own politicians and civil servants who, like politicians and civil servants everywhere, seek to expand their powers, even at the expense of the people they are supposed to represent. Thus, when the government of the Province of Quebec pushes for greater provincial autonomy in the interest of the people of Quebec, the governments of the provinces of English Canada - like jackals at the feet of a lion - cry "Me too" in the interest of expanding their domains. The Federal government might be expected to resist the devolution of powers, but it is particularly vulnerable to the threat of separation, for all or part of the Federal government may cease to exist, and many life-long careers may come to an abrupt end, if Quebec actually goes. There is a real danger of our conceding to excessive devolution of powers to the provinces, splintering the sharing community, magnifying trade restrictions and fostering a destructive rivalry among the provinces. There is a real danger that, unprepared when pressure for revision of the constitution mounts once again, English Canadians may allow themselves to be sucked into new constitutional arrangements that would over time weaken the bonds among the provinces of English Canada, leaving English Canada as a disorganized and ungovernable collection of semi-independent provinces, incapable of cohesive action when Quebec finally chooses to depart.

Quebec has a good deal less to fear than English Canada if new constitutional arrangements are badly designed and do not work well in the long run. It is sufficient that new constitutional arrangements work well for Quebec now because Quebec can secede if things turn sour later on. A new country of Quebec would have a ready-made government in place. English Canada's disadvantage lies precisely in the absence of a comparable government to emerge if required.

The separation of Quebec would not be the creation of a new country. It

would be the creation of at least two new countries, neither of which need be bound by the terms of the BNA Act or the Canadian Constitution as it is today. For Quebec, the transition might be relatively easy. The government of the Province of Quebec would become the government of the country of Quebec. For English Canada, the transition could be difficult. We would be confronted with a crisis of sovereignty in which nobody could be quite sure where authority lies: Would the English-speaking Members of Parliament be recognized by the civil service, the army and the general public as the true Parliament of English Canada? If recognized, would they be able to piece together a ruling party from the remnants of the political parties of Canada? Would the English residue of the Supreme Court preserve the authority that the Court now enjoys? Would the taxing and spending powers of the Federal government be respected? Would the governments of the provinces exploit the political vacuum to claim sovereignty over their territories, refusing to recognize the Federal authority at all? A new Prime Minister would be required, especially if the standing Prime Minister were from Quebec. And it is at precisely the moment when Quebec chooses to go and English Canada can be expected to be most leaderless and most disorganized that we would be called upon to negotiate the terms of separation with Quebec: the conversion of the Canadian dollar into two currencies, the division of responsibility for the national debt and Federal pensions, the division of Federal assets, perhaps even territorial adjustments. I said that English Canada would not wish to go to war to stop the separation of Quebec. That is no guarantee war will not break out by misadventure, misunderstanding or failure to negotiate the terms of separation. Wars do begin over trivia. The risk of misadventure may be considerable if English Canada cannot speak with a clear voice in its dealings with the new country of Quebec.

Nor can we begin to reconstruct the country effectively until we know where we are going. Should English Canada emerge as one country, as two or three smaller countries, or as nine squabbling principalities with no foundation in the character and interests of their citizens and nothing but on-going governments to hold them together? If English Canada emerges as a single country, should it be a unitary or a federal state? If it is to be a federal state, what are the boundaries and the powers of the provinces to be? With over half the population of English Canada, Ontario might be too large to coexist comfortably as one province in a federation. Do we want to preserve bicameral government, and, if so, would we be content with the Senate as it is today? Should Ottawa remain as the capital city, or might we prefer a city further west? Do we want to keep the Charter of Rights?

These decisions are more likely to come out right if we plan than if we drift, as we now appear to be doing, and there is a real danger that ad hoc decisions to keep governments functioning may harden into long term institutional arrangements which are different from and less advantageous than the institutions that English Canadians would deliberately choose. Hasty and ill-conceived deals among frantic politicians may bind English Canada, for better or for worse, for many, many years to come.

That the appropriate constitution for an English Canadian country may be quite different from the constitution of Canada today is a direct implication of the Canadian compromise, for there would be no compromise at all if the institutions of Canada as it is today were precisely what English Canadians would prefer for themselves in the absence of Quebec. It should be evident by now what I think the broad outline of that constitution should be. I would like to see a country comprising the whole of Canada, except Quebec which, for the purposes of this analysis, is presumed to have separated; a

country with a clear line of division between the public and private realms, where all citizens have exactly the same civil rights and where no sub-group of Canadians has specific constitutional status; a country with English as the only official language in the public sector and where the French language has exactly the same status in the private sector as Italian, German and Chinese do now; a country with no constitutionally-sanctioned provinces, a unitary state where towns and counties have more or less the same status as the towns and counties of England or France today.

I conclude with a suggestion and a plea. The suggestion is partly rhetorical, an idea thrown out for discussion, not a well-considered and deeply-held view of how things should be. If the Canadian constitution is ever to be changed to enhance the powers of the Province of Quebec - and I am certainly not proposing that it should be - then the common interests of English Canada should be programmed into some specifically English level of government covering the whole of English Canada and endowed with its own responsibilities and its own power to tax.

Presumably an English Canadian government would occupy a level below the Federal government and on a par with Quebec, and the provinces of English Canada would constitute a third level beneath the English Canadian umbrella. The powers of an English Canadian government - which would as a matter of course be conferred on Quebec as well - might be quite extensive. Redistribution of income among people, health and education could be conducted at that level to provide English Canada with the economic and social advantages of extensive sharing and the political foundation of a new central government. Equalization payments among the provinces might be run at that level of government, and therefore confined within English Canada, because there is no real basis for sharing with a province that is ambivalent

about remaining in Confederation and might no longer be part of Canada should the time come when it is to be a contributor rather than a beneficiary of the arrangement. A good place to start may be manpower training. As our Prime Minister appears to be ceding authority over manpower training in Quebec, the comparable power elsewhere in Canada might be ceded to a transprovincial government in the English provinces.

An entirely English Canadian level of government would provide a civil service and a network of politicians who would be committed to English Canada exclusively and as a whole. An English Canadian level of government would stand as a counterweight to the disintegrative tendencies in the present political arrangements within English Canada and would serve as a government-in-embryo to be born if necessary in the event of the secession of Quebec.

My plea is for English Canadians to take seriously the prospect of the separation of Quebec and to open discussion on the design of a government for an English Canadian country. There is a widespread aversion - almost a taboo - among English Canadians against talking about the shape of an English Canadian country after the departure of Quebec. It is considered unfitting, or even unpatriotic, to discuss the dismemberment of one's country while that country is still a going concern. It is believed that there is sometimes a virtue in silence, that old agreements ought not to be examined too closely lest some mysterious bond be broken, that separation is less likely to occur if it is not discussed. It is feared that talk about an English Canadian country would be interpreted as a rejection of Quebec, as sending an unfriendly message at a time when good will is essential. It is asserted that "My country includes Quebec", as though a Canada without Quebec is not worth discussing because, like a country devastated after an atomic attack,

it would not be worth living in at all.

I can accept none of these arguments. The case for silence may be valid when the taboo is universally respected, but it makes no sense when there is an active separatist party in Quebec. The separation of Quebec should be unthinkable in both English Canada and Quebec, or in neither. Fear of offending Quebec is counterproductive and absurd. If talk of government after separation is offensive, which I believe it is not, then English Canada has already been offended in spades and there can be no valid objection to our responding in kind. The message we should be sending Quebec - because the message is probably true now, though it may not have been true in the past - is that a vote for a separatist party is a vote for separation, not for concessions to avert separation. Whatever its merits as a bumper sticker, "My country includes Quebec" is not a tenable stance for English Canadians. Quebec may go whether we like it or not, unless we are prepared to hold Quebec by force or to make any concession whatsoever to preserve the name, if not the substance, of our country. But I should not be engaged in this moralizing and strategy-mongering. There is at bottom only one significant reason for abandoning the taboo against discussion of the shape of an English Canadian country. It is that we may be seriously harmed if we do not. That is why it is essential to focus upon interests rather than upon messages, strategy, tit-for-tat or moralizing about who is offending whom. Strategy has its place, but our major concern now is to act dispassionately, putting aside the cheap vindictiveness to which we are all tempted to some extent. We focus on interests so that we may compromise when compromise is appropriate, hold fast when compromise is inappropriate and govern ourselves as best we can.

I would like to see an official recognition by the English provinces

that an English Canadian country may have to be constructed. One or more provinces might sponsor a commission, along the lines of a Royal Commission, to solicit opinion and to seek consensus about the appropriate institutions. Universities and organizations in the private sector might sponsor their own investigations as was done during the debates over the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords to determine the cost of separation. The design of institutions for an English Canadian country should be widely discussed in newspapers, on the radio and on television. Every child in English Canada should have a half-completed draft of a constitution in his school bag. My fellow social scientists have a special responsibility because we are hired and tenured to analyze how society works and to think about problems which, for one reason or another, are not adequately considered within government or elsewhere in the community. Maybe, once the matter has been thoroughly examined, most English Canadians will share my views about what is required. Probably not. The important consideration is that we establish some degree of consensus to legitimize in advance whatever the appropriate institutions turn out to be.

As we are not prepared to hold Quebec in Confederation by force and with a significant risk that Quebec may choose to go, we have no option but to plan for the reconstruction of our country.