

Seeing Canada Whole? J.W. Pickersgill and Inclusive Nationalism



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Abstract

Although the search for the answer to the ‘great Canadian problem’, the perceived lack of national unity and identity in Canada, has occupied Canadian politicians and public thinkers for over a century, studies of Canadian nationalism have often been framed in relation to either exclusive (Québécois) nationalism or to the American neighbour to the south. In this work, the liberal Canadian nationalism of the postwar period itself is centred, and its role in governmental policies is studied through the person of J.W. Pickersgill, an influential civil servant, politician, and self-described ‘ardent nationalist’ who viewed promoting Canadian unity as his greatest role in public life. Pickersgill’s personal concept of nationalism is placed within a historical context of liberal Canadian nationalism and defined as an inclusive nationalism, which seeks to equitably foster a multitude of ways of life, including religious, cultural or linguistic expressions, based on a shared commitment to a pluralistic national identity. An analysis of two case studies from Pickersgill’s tenure as minister of Citizenship and Immigration, based in part on archival sources, reveals significant tensions and inconsistencies between Pickersgill’s ideal of inclusive nationalism and its application in practice, especially when it intersected with assimilationist governmental policies regarding Indigenous Canadians.

Keywords: nationalism, inclusive nationalism, Canadian nationalism, J.W. Pickersgill, Liberal Party of Canada, Hungarian refugee crisis, Hobbema Samson Cree

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Introduction

It appears that 2016 was a good year for nationalism. Donald Trump, who has used the term ‘nationalist’ to describe himself and his political ideology on multiple occasions,¹ was elected president of the United States of America. The British public voted to leave the European Union after a campaign which was fraught with nationalistic slogans condemning the European project, questioning international cooperation at large, and lamenting the loss of the British Empire.² In the Philippines, president Rodrigo Duterte was elected and promptly led his country to retreat from international trade deals, reviving a simmering Filipino anti-US nationalism.³ In Russia, president Vladimir Putin used shared ethnic origins as a justification for the newly completed annexation of the Crimean peninsula, an ethnic nationalist refrain echoed by his followers.⁴ These developments led one journalist to declare that “the New Nationalists are taking over”,⁵ with politicians worldwide espousing “a bitter populist rejection of the status quo that global elites have imposed on the international system since the Cold War ended”.⁶

The rise of this New Nationalism, rallying against the ‘global elites’ which promote open trade, and vilifying non-white immigration, seems to confirm the association of nationalism as a political doctrine with far-right and ethnic ideologies. Yet if nationalism is linked to anti-

¹ Aaron Blake, “Trump’s embrace of a fraught term — ‘nationalist’ — could cement a dangerous racial divide” *The Washington Post*, 23 October 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/10/23/trumps-embrace-fraught-term-nationalist-could-cement-dangerous-racial-divide/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.0667fea8e85c.

² Jeremy White-Stanley, “Post-imperial nostalgia: Brexit and the Empire,” *The Daily Times*, 8 March 2017, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/24383/post-imperial-nostalgia-brexit-and-the-empire/>.

³ Julio C. Teehankee, “Duterte’s Resurgent Nationalism in the Philippines: A Discursive Institutional Analysis” *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 3, (2016): 69–89

⁴ Kimberly Marten, “Vladimir Putin: Ethnic Russian Nationalist” *The Washington Post*, 19 March 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/19/vladimir-putin-ethnic-russian-nationalist/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.59063dc913a3.

⁵ Michael Hirsh, “Why The New Nationalists are Taking Over” *Politico Magazine*, 27 June 2016, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/06/nationalism-donald-trump-boris-johnson-brexit-foreign-policy-xenophobia-isolationism-213995>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

immigration and anti-globalist sentiment, it is interesting to note that in Canada, a country which has a reputation for being so open and welcoming that apologizing is a national pastime, eighty percent of the population identifies to some extent as a ‘Canadian nationalist’.⁷ It seems that far from being a maligned minority belief, Canadian nationalism is broadly supported by the Canadian population, leading the *National Post* to declare that “in Canada, the term ‘nationalism’ doesn’t seem to have a bad rap.”⁸ This despite the fact that with its culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse population, Canada does not seem a likely candidate for a strong nationalist movement. The New Nationalism, as defined by Hirsh, rallies against ‘global elites’ and non-white immigration, while Canada’s current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called open immigration his country’s greatest competitive advantage over the United States.⁹ Clearly, the development of nationalism as a political ideology in Canada is not congruous with the global resurgence of populist ethnic nationalism. This raises the questions of what the ideology of Canadian nationalism actually is, and how it has developed into a widely held belief among the Canadian population.

Since the adoption of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1988, Canada has officially been a country of ‘inclusive citizenship’, as termed by the Canadian government.¹⁰ The core belief behind this policy is that “with no pressure to assimilate and give up their culture, immigrants freely choose their new citizenship because they want to be Canadians”.¹¹ The government policy of multiculturalism officially established anti-assimilationism as a feature of

⁷ IPSOS. *Canadian Online Omni March 1 - March 8, 2010, Detailed Tables*. 6 March 2010, <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/publication/2010-03/4707-2dt.pdf>: 7.

⁸Jordan Press, “In Canada, the term ‘nationalism’ doesn’t seem to have a bad rap. Here’s why” *The National Post Online*, 9 December 2018, <https://nationalpost.com/news/in-canada-the-term-nationalism-doesnt-seem-to-have-a-bad-rap-heres-why>

⁹ Emma Hinchliffe, “Canada's Advantage Over the United States? Immigration, Says Justin Trudeau” *Fortune Online*, 6 November 2018, <http://fortune.com/2018/11/05/canada-advantage-over-us-immigration-trudeau/>.

¹⁰ Government of Canada, ‘Canadian Multiculturalism: An Inclusive Citizenship,’ Citizenship and Immigration Canada Webpage, archived March 12 2014. <https://web.archive.org/web/20140312210113/http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/citizenship.asp>

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the Canadian national identity.¹² However, support for anti-assimilationism and inclusiveness in Canadian immigration and citizenship policy stretches back further than Pierre Trudeau, who officially announced the policy in the 1970s. Its roots can be traced to the very confederation of Canada, when bilingualism, the equality of the French and English language, was officially entrenched in the Canadian constitution, the *British North America Act*, preserving the rights of both French and English speaking Canadians. After confederation, the search for a distinctly Canadian identity was embraced by the anti-imperialists of Canadian pre-war society and carried forward in the next century by the Liberal party when its leader, Prime Minister Lester Pearson established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. The commission's report, recognizing "the contribution made by the other [non-English, non-French] ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada",¹³ provided the basis for Pierre Trudeau's call for official non-assimilationism in the form of a policy of multiculturalism, instituted a decade later.

The topic of Canadian nationalism has also seen heated debate within academia. Leading historian Ramsay Cook, who authored a multitude of works on what he called 'Canadianism', asserted in 1967 that scholarship on Canadian nationalism had been dominated for a century by debate on the 'great Canadian problem'; the search for a remedy to the perceived lack of Canadian unity and identity.¹⁴ In examining this great Canadian problem, scholars have identified, and identified with, a multitude of Canadian nationalisms, such as imperial federalist nationalism, Quebec nationalism, Aboriginal or First Nations nationalism, economic anti-American nationalism and the 'red Tory' nationalism of George Grant, to name a few. Yet in these attempts to answer the great Canadian problem, much attention has been devoted to those forms of nationalism which seek to exclude, and relatively little has been said about the tradition of Canadian nationalism which posits that the answer to the great Canadian problem may be sought in an inclusive identity. That this latter Canadian nationalism has not received adequate academic attention is regrettable, as its ideological impact within the Liberal Canadian

¹² Miriam Richter, *Creating the National Mosaic: Multiculturalism in Canadian Children's Literature from 1950 to 1994* (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2011): 37.

¹³ Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, volume one* (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1967): xxv.

¹⁴ Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Centennial Cerebrations," *International Journal* 22, no. 4 (1967): 663.

governments of the 1940s and 50s is extensive; it formed the basis for the later official policy of multiculturalism as introduced by Pierre Trudeau in 1971 and informed federal governmental actions in a variety of policy areas for decades.¹⁵

Between the establishment of official bilingualism at confederation in 1867 and that of official multiculturalism in 1988 lies a century of development, in which questions of Canadian national identity, citizenship and nationalism were debated heavily in federal government. One person who was present in the Canadian government at the crucial period of time between the outbreak of the second World War and the establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was the Right Honourable John Whitney Pickersgill. This civil servant and Liberal politician served as a trusted advisor to Mackenzie King during the second World War, where he became “a prime-ministerial aide, with a finger in every pie, whatever its political content.”¹⁶ After King resigned in 1948, Pickersgill stayed on to advise his successor Louis St Laurent, and rose to the rank of head of the Prime Minister’s Office, in which position he continued to influence policy across a wide range of subjects. Deciding that he wanted to be free of the constraints placed on civil servants in expressing partizan sentiment, Pickersgill entered public life in 1953 as a junior minister and MP for a Newfoundland riding, after which he was promoted to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in 1954. In this position, Pickersgill was able to direct policy efforts on immigration, citizenship and national identity in a period which saw a huge influx of immigrants entering Canada, as well as a surge in debate on the meaning of Canadian citizenship, which had been established as a separate category from British citizenship only a few years earlier. As a fixture of the Liberal party whose association with Prime Ministers Mackenzie King and St Laurent had provided him with a large network of associates within the federal government, Pickersgill was in a position to effect change in a variety of policy areas for most of his career.

Taking into account his influence on Liberal governmental policies in the post-war period, it is interesting to note that Pickersgill described himself as an ‘ardent Canadian

¹⁵ Jack Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1982): 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 217.

nationalist'.¹⁷ He described his view of this ideology as such: "we [do] not base our nationalism on race or language, or indeed on anything exclusive, but on a bi-cultural, multi-facial foundation, which [is] just as broad as our country."¹⁸ This strongly held belief in a 'multi-facial' nationalism permeates Pickersgill's writings and personal papers, and he argued for the adoption of such a nationalism in speeches all throughout his political career. It is for this reason that Pickersgill serves as a useful conduit for the examination of a particular phase in the evolution of Canadian nationalism, a phase in between the anti-imperialist origins of the notion and the current state of official multiculturalism.

Pickersgill, with his long career spanning three decades and encompassing a variety of both civil service and elected government positions, is a person reflective to some extent of a larger political consensus in the Liberal governments which he served. His belief in Canadian nationalism and the importance of Canadian unity was perhaps unusually fervent, but, like most of his political opinions, fairly in line with the official Liberal party platform.¹⁹ Pickersgill's influence in the Liberal governments of the late 1940s and the 1950s was extensive: a common saying among government officials and civil servants at the time was that to get something done in Ottawa, one had to "clear it with Jack".²⁰ Because of this, Pickersgill's papers provide a rich insight into a multitude of facets of the governments which he served, and examining Pickersgill's notion of Canadian nationalism and its expression in policy involves various domains, bringing together different aspects of public affairs. Therefore, the image which emerges from examining Pickersgill's nationalist beliefs and their expression in policy serves not just as a representation of a single politician's nationalist ideology but also as a characterization of a wider belief within the Canadian governments of the post-war period regarding Canadian national identity. Such an examination of the development of a more inclusive kind of

¹⁷ J.W. Pickersgill, *My Years with Louis St Laurent: A Political Memoir* (Toronto and Buffalo, Toronto University Press, 1975): 6.

¹⁸ J.W. Pickersgill, A reply to Professor T.M. Franck's rejoinder. 25 October 1954. J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 7 "Outgoing Correspondence", Library and Archives Canada

¹⁹ see for example the section 'Equal Partners in Confederation' of the Liberal Party Speaker's Guide, 1963 Campaign, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 103 "Election 1963. Strategy", Library and Archives Canada

²⁰ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 220.

nationalism into a broadly supported belief across the population of a country such as Canada can serve as a valuable reflection upon the alternatives to exclusive ideologies in the face of a rising global tide of ethnic, exclusionary nationalism.

In order, then, to investigate the development of the phase of Canadian nationalism which existed post-World War II and pre-official multiculturalism through the person of J.W. Pickersgill, I ask the following question: what is J.W. Pickersgill's personal concept of Canadian nationalism and how does he attempt to shape governmental policy to achieve his nationalist ideal? In order to answer this research question, in the first chapter of this thesis I will contextualize and define the liberal Canadian nationalism which Pickersgill is a representative of. I chart the evolution of Canadian nationalist thinking from the confederation of Canada in 1867, effectively its establishment as a country, through the 19th and into the 20th century, arriving at the post-World War II Liberal government's concept of nationalism which J.W. Pickersgill subscribed to. This form of nationalism is then characterized as an inclusive nationalism, where I define inclusive nationalism as 'nationalist political activity of a kind that seeks to equitably foster a multitude of ways of life, including religious, cultural or linguistic expressions, based on a shared commitment to a pluralistic national identity', as opposed to an exclusive nationalism as defined by Chennells.²¹

In the second chapter, I place J.W. Pickersgill in a Liberal party tradition and government apparatus, and further examine his personal convictions. I review his expressions of Canadian nationalism, analyzing both secondary sources on the network of Liberal party officials in the WWII and post-war Canadian governments, termed the 'mandarinate' by Granatstein,²² of which Pickersgill was a part, and primary source materials from the J.W. Pickersgill fonds, the archive of Pickersgill's personal papers which is held by the Library and Archives Canada. Using this analysis, I will investigate my hypothesis that Pickersgill's 'ardent Canadian nationalism' is in fact inclusive nationalism, aimed not at assimilation but at the preservation of various cultural,

²¹ David Chennells, *The Politics of Nationalism in Canada: Cultural Conflict since 1760* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001): 5.

²² Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 1.

ethnic and linguistic expressions, and their incorporation into a pluralistic Canadian national identity.

To answer the question of how Pickersgill attempted to shape governmental policy to achieve his nationalist ideal, I will analyze his actions in two case studies. While Pickersgill's career was varied, and his multitude of positions within the civil service and as an elected official in the Liberal government provide ample opportunities for case study analysis, I have selected two case studies from the same 1956-7 period, when Pickersgill served as minister of Citizenship and Immigration. As head of this department, Pickersgill was in a position where he could dictate policy in a number of areas directly related to national identity. A comparison of the two cases selected shines light on the tension between Pickersgill's ideal of nationalism and its application in practice, and reveals inconsistencies in his treatment of different ethnic and cultural groups, despite his ideal of inclusiveness.

The first case study, that of the Hungarian refugee crisis of 1956-7, is discussed in chapter three. In this section, I analyze Pickersgill's response to the refugee crisis which followed the brutal repression of the Hungarian popular uprising of 1956. As minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Pickersgill headed the federal government's efforts to resettle refugees of the conflict on Canadian soil, an event which is often referred to as a watershed moment for Canadian refugee policy. I will analyze Pickersgill's actions in both the global context of the Cold War and the domestic context of the political strife between federal and provincial officials occurring at the time, to determine how Pickersgill's concept of inclusive nationalism is expressed in his handling of the conflict. In my analysis, I will make use of secondary works by a variety of academics, accounts by the Hungarian refugees themselves as recorded in various Canadian publications, and materials from the J.W. Pickersgill fonds such as letters, telegrams, newspaper clippings and governmental memoranda.

The second case study, which is discussed in chapter four, concerns the Samson Cree band membership crisis which began in 1951 but came to a head in the winter of 1956. As minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Pickersgill headed the Indian Affairs department. In this role, he was responsible for the execution of the government policy on Indigenous issues, most primarily the *Indian Act*. This legislation was amended by Pickersgill's predecessor in

1951, setting a new definition of the term ‘Indian’ and dictating a process for determining band membership which would deprive 118 Samson Cree of their Indian status. In 1956, under Pickersgill’s leadership the Indian registrar, who was tasked with deciding whether the 118 were entitled to Indian status, ordered the 118 Samson Cree to be evicted from their reserve. This decision caused widespread public consternation, but Pickersgill defended the decision and the provisions of the Indian Act from which it stemmed until its reversal by an Alberta judge in early 1957. In reviewing this crisis, I will analyze Pickersgill’s actions in the context of the Canadian government’s imperialist and assimilationist attitude towards First Nations people and Indigenous culture at large, investigating how Pickersgill’s ideal of inclusive nationalism informs his actions in this conflict. As the Samson Cree crisis itself is discussed only very marginally in academic literature, for my analysis of this particular case I will be making use primarily of materials from the J.W. Pickersgill fonds, including letters, telegrams, newspaper clippings, memoranda, and a petition to the queen of England, in addition to secondary sources on the postwar Canadian governmental policies and attitudes regarding First Nations and Indigenous people.

Chapter One - History and Theories of Canadian Nationalism

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the Canadian public's association with the ideology of nationalism seems to differ to those of other nations. Instead of calling to mind far-right, exclusionary beliefs, the term Canadian nationalism appears to collocate with an inclusive national identity which does not call for assimilation. How is it that nationalism has come to be defined this way in the Canadian public mind? In this chapter, I will examine the evolution of Canadian nationalism(s), investigating its origins in confederation and charting its development through key moments. I will also analyze the concept of nationalism in Canadian political and academic discourse of the postwar years, arriving at a definition of the concept of inclusive nationalism.

The Royal Announcement of Confederation of Canada, the document which in 1867 lay the foundations for the creation of the Canadian nation as it is today, begins with the words “a proclamation for Uniting the Provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick into one Dominion, under the name of Canada.” Confederation did not create a sovereign Canadian state but rather a semi-sovereign domain, its government elected by the Canadian people but its powers of constitutional amendment still in the hands of the British parliament and its foreign policy still ruled by British government. Yet the wording of the proclamation, declaring that the provinces were from that moment on united, foreshadows the long search for Canadian unity and identity that was to follow.

During the process of confederation, the spectre of the American civil war haunted the so-called Fathers of Confederation. The US was the “best available example”²³ of a federalism which Canada might copy, but the crisis of the civil war led to reluctance in following the American example. The compromise which was reached, a federal system of provinces united in a domain under British oversight and as part of the British empire, left many issues open for individual interpretation, not the least of which was the issue of the Canadian identity. Canadians were British subjects, and the British monarch was the head of state. Yet one of its provinces was

²³ Desmond Morton, *A Short History of Canada* (Toronto, McLelland & Stewart, 1994): 85.

French, with a distinctly French cultural and linguistic heritage. Furthermore, there were significant Indigenous, Inuit and Métis populations, as well as immigrants from other European nations, whose linguistic and cultural assimilation to either English or French identities was far from certain. Unity was a political reality but not a cultural one.

In the decades following confederation, a debate raged between imperial federalists who cherished the connection between Canada and Britain and those nationalists who strove for a greater independence and sovereignty for Canada. The imperial federalists were often English-speaking Canadians who feared assimilation with or annexation by the American neighbour to the south: “it seemed axiomatic to them that without the imperial connection Canada must inexorably come under the domination of the United States and ultimately be annexed to it.”²⁴ Their response to this threat, as well as the that of the perceived fragmentation of the ‘British’ sections of Canada, was to advocate for tighter bonds to the British motherland. Imperialists such as George M. Grant and George Parkin argued for a type of broad federal system where Canada functions as a subsidiary of Great Britain, a “Great Britain reorganized as a federation, or union, or alliance, [where] Canada would hold an honourable place, gained on lines of true national development”, in contrast to a federation with the United States where Canada “could have nothing but a bastard nationality, the offspring of either meanness, selfishness, or fear.”²⁵ Imperial federalism has often been framed as the antithesis of Canadian nationalism, with the latter winning out and becoming the reigning political paradigm of the 20th century,²⁶ but in fact imperial federalism can be seen as a variety of Canadian nationalism. The imperial federalists strove for Canadian unity and prided themselves on Canadian historical achievements, and felt that destiny of Canadian nationhood was to be equal partners with Great Britain in a federal union which recognized Canadian nationhood.

²⁴ Carl Berger, *Imperialism and Nationalism 1884-1914: A Conflict in Canadian Thought* (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Co, 1969): 11.

²⁵ George Parkin, “The Forces of Union”, in *Canadian Political Thought*, ed. H.D. Forbes (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985): 31.

²⁶ Carl Berger, *The sense of power: studies in the ideas of Canadian imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013), 9.

The imperial federalists' ideology was coloured with racial thinking.²⁷ Parkin makes many references to the Anglo-Saxon race's superiority, describing its character as "embody[ing] the most aggressive moral forces and the most progressive political and social forces of the world".²⁸ French Canadians, imperial federalists agreed, were a dying breed who must assimilate into British culture and language use or "be handicapped for life"²⁹ as the tide of English-speaking immigrants swept over them. Imperial federalists such as Parkin also felt that the reorganization of the British empire into a federal system would provide a counterbalance of Canadian "trained, intelligent and conscientious citizenship" to maintain balance against the "Indian population of two hundred and forty millions over and above the native races of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and many minor regions"³⁰ which populated the rest of the Commonwealth. Their ideal, then, of a Canadian identity was explicitly a *British* Canadian identity, even for those who had no British ancestry: "[n]aturally and rightly French Canadians have a sentimental attachment to France, but politically they are British and their hearts are all for Canada."³¹ In the last decade of the 19th century, a hybrid kind of imperialism even emerged out of this imperial federalism: "imperial nationalism", which argued that if the northern races were superior, as was argued by British imperialists, Canadian pre-eminence within the empire was inevitable: "who could be more northerly than Canadians? In no distant era, Canada would dominate the British empire."³²

It is perhaps not surprising that the anti-imperialist, nationalist response to the imperial federalism of the post-confederation period was spearheaded by a French Canadian, Henri Bourassa. In 1903, together with Olivar Asselin and two other political allies, Bourassa formed the *Ligue nationaliste canadienne*, an anti-imperialist, Canadian nationalist organization. Its

²⁷ Moton, *A Short History of Canada*, 142.

²⁸ Parkin quoted in H.D. Forbes, *Canadian Political Thought* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985): 156.

²⁹ George M. Grant, "In Defence of Canada" in *Imperialism and Nationalism 1884-1914: A Conflict in Canadian Thought*, ed. Carl Berger (Toronto, Copp Clark Publishing, 1969) 25.

³⁰ Parkin, "The Forces of Union," 164.

³¹ G.M. Grant, "In Defence of Canada," 25

³² Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 142.

program called for increased Canadian independence from Britain as well as from the United States, including the ability to negotiate treaties, raise armies, declare war and regulate immigration. The party's domestic policies included a provision for the stimulation of a Canadian literary and artistic output, as well as a call for a more active colonization policy³³. Bourassa argued that French Canadians have "no feelings whatever [towards the Empire], and naturally so."³⁴ Because of this lack of connection to the British empire, Bourassa stated, French-Canadians were able to better weigh the advantages and disadvantages of imperialism. Anglo-Canadians "should be prepared to study the problems of Imperialism from a purely Canadian standpoint" and follow the French-Canadian example; they had "sacrificed much of [their] racial tendencies for the sake of Canadian unity."³⁵ In fact, Bourassa argued that French Canadians were the only "exclusively Canadian ethnic group",³⁶ with English-Canadians and other ethnic immigrants to Canada only partly Canadianised as they still considered their European mother lands the 'home land', a habit Bourassa claimed the French-Canadians lacked. Bourassa's main warning to the imperial federalists was that any tightening of ties to the British empire would constitute an imposition upon Canadian independence which would move French-Canadian public sentiment in the direction of Pan-Americanism, the ideal of a united North American continent though the annexation of Canada by the United States.³⁷ Although French-Canadians had not previously looked favourably upon US annexation, Bourassa argued that their insistence upon autonomy and their "American ... ethnical temperament" would incline them to 'thro[w] in [their] lot with [their] powerful neighbour to the South.'³⁸

Bourassa and his fellow French-Canadian thinkers were not the only ones who strove for increased Canadian independence from Great Britain's influence. J.S. Ewart, an Anglo-Canadian

³³ Forbes, "Canadian Political Thought," 186.

³⁴ Henri Bourassa, "The French-Canadian in the British Empire" in *Canadian Political Thought*, ed. H.D. Forbes (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985) 179.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 177.

³⁷ Ibid, 182.

³⁸ Ibid, 183.

lawyer, author and self-confessed Canadian nationalist, argued that the separation between Canada and the United Kingdom was complete in all but name and that Canada had no political connection to the United Kingdom apart from the sovereign which they shared. To properly acknowledge this position, Ewart stated, the country should no longer be called ‘the Dominion of Canada’ but rather ‘the Kingdom of Canada’.³⁹ Ewart argued that this title would recognize the link between the United Kingdom and Canada while acknowledging what he felt was the equality in legal status of the two. There were two main benefits to this change in title according to Ewart. Firstly, it would enhance Canadian self-respect and provide much-needed Canadian unity, cohesion and solidarity: “[a]t present we are English, Scotch, Irish, French, American etc. We ought to be Canadians... National sentiment is the only secure bulwark of national existence. We shall never have it as long as we remain a colony.”⁴⁰ Secondly, it would decrease the chance of Canada being dragged into a British conflict against Canadian interests. Ewart’s second argument, made in 1912, foreshadowed what would become the next turning point in the history of Canadian nationalist politics: the Conscription crisis of 1917.

In 1914, the European political stage was set for war. Canadians had been drawn into British conflicts a decade earlier during the Boer war, when a number of Canadian volunteer battalions were despatched to South Africa and fought under the direction of the British army. The Boer war decision caused some unrest in Montreal, where fights broke out between French- and English-Canadian students, the former being accused by the latter of disloyalty to Britain.⁴¹ When the Great War broke out in earnest, societal divisions emerged along these same lines as it had over ten years earlier, now bitterly divided over the issue of compulsory military service.

A majority of the Anglo-Canadian population, having responded “enthusiastically to the demands of Imperial patriotism”,⁴² was in favour of allowing Canadian military conscription. Many English-Canadians subscribed to the imperialist notion that while the war was taking place

³⁹ J.S. Ewart, “Canadian Independence” in *Imperialism and Nationalism 1884-1914: A Conflict in Canadian Thought*, ed. Carl Berger (Toronto, Copp Clark Publishing, 1969).

⁴⁰ Ewart, “Canadian Independence,” 84.

⁴¹ Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 144.

⁴² Desmond Morton, “Did the French Canadians Cause the Conscription Crisis of 1917?” *Canadian Military History* 24, no. 1 (2015): 6, <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol24/iss1/25>.

on a different continent, it was in fact a war fought directly in defence of Canada, fought, as one recruiting pamphlet put it, to “defend and maintain freedom and self-government in Canada”.⁴³ A majority of French-Canadians, led by Bourassa, did not see the war as a necessary measure to defend the country but rather as an exclusively English-Canadian cause, and were opposed to compulsory military service.⁴⁴ Bourassa, decrying conscription as an imperialist measure, advocated for a plebiscite vote which would allow the Canadian public to directly decide whether conscription would be imposed.⁴⁵ In a somewhat unexpected political alliance, he was joined in his call for a plebiscite by Liberal leader sir Wilfrid Laurier, who feared that endorsing compulsory military service would mean losing all Liberal support in Quebec.⁴⁶ Most Liberal politicians, however, did not join Laurier in supporting the cause of volunteerism and following the 1917 election Robert Borden was able to form a coalition Unionist government consisting of Conservative and Liberal supporters of conscription.

By the end of the war in 1918, only a year after the passing of the hotly contested Military Service Act, 24 thousand conscripted men had been sent to the front lines.⁴⁷ Although their reinforcement came too late in the war to be of any decisive help, had the war continued conscripts would have been absolutely necessary in order to replenish the losses suffered on the front lines.⁴⁸ Whereas conscription had thus been somewhat of a military success, it was a failure for Canadian nation-building. Those who had believed that fighting a common enemy would unify the young Canadian nation and foster a “strong and vibrant pan-Canadian nationalism built

⁴³ Amy J. Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience: Conscientious Objection in Canada during the First World War* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2009): 22.

⁴⁴ Christopher Sharpe, “Recruitment and Conscription (Canada)” in *1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, eds. Ute Daniel et al (Freie Universität Berlin, 2014): 7, DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10670.

⁴⁵ Beatrice Richard, “Henri Bourassa and Conscription: Traitor or Saviour?” in *Canadian Military Journal* 7, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 78, <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo7/no4/doc/richard-eng.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Morton, “*A Short History of Canada*, 173.

⁴⁷ Sharpe, “Recruitment and Conscription (Canada),” 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

on the memory of the Great War”⁴⁹ had underestimated the anger and rancour which coursed through French-Canadian society during the conscription crisis, and its power in dashing the myth of Canadian post-war unity. What had been an opportunity for constructing a pan-Canadian nationalism based on a shared war effort became a wedge which further separated the two nationalisms: “the events of 1914-18 became a stumbling block, not a bridge.”⁵⁰

In the interwar years, the division between Canadian and French-Canadian nationalism deepened. The post-war economic crisis hit Quebec especially hard, fuelling discontent within French-Canadian society, and lending new credibility to the separatist hardline nationalist ideas of public thinkers such as André Larendeau. Although the majority of French Canadians shied away from so harsh a measure as advocating secession from the Canadian government, the call for greater provincial autonomy was widely supported, and in the face of an increasingly independent Canada within the crumbling British empire, provincial autonomy largely replaced anti-imperialism as the reigning French nationalist objective.⁵¹ American liberalism seemed to lose its attraction to many *Canadiens*, replaced by the conservative and ultramontane French nationalism of Catholic thinkers such as Fr. Lionel Groulx. Groulx founded the nationalist *Action Française*, a movement whose “confusion of religion and politics ... was carried into every walk of French-Canadian life by the heady indoctrination [of] the young élite”.⁵² The *Action* went as far as to argue for the prohibition of non-French media, fearful that such media would cause Canadian youth to lose their French Catholic identity.⁵³

The ‘other’, non-French Canadian nationalism also deepened in the post-war period. Robert Borden’s successor as prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, headed a minority government which could govern only through compromise. King recognized that while there

⁴⁹ Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1997): 258.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 259.

⁵¹ Fernand Ouellet, “The Historical Background of Separatism in Quebec” in *French-Canadian Nationalism*, ed. Ramsey Cook (Toronto, Macmillan, 1969): 63.

⁵² Forbes, *Canadian Political Thought*, 251.

⁵³ Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 192.

were little ideals and ideas shared between the nationalists and the *nationalistes*, they both despised imperialism. Led by this consensus, King's government further loosened Canadian ties to Britain, and its participation in the newly created League of Nations was halfhearted at best.⁵⁴ There was also an attempt to break free entirely from British empire through the Statute of Westminster. To complete the process of formal separation from Britain, a formula for amending the British North America Act, Canada's de facto constitution, had to be found. As it stood, the BNA could only be amended by an act of British parliament. Patriation of the constitution would complete Canada's independence, but Canadian politicians' disagreement on the proposed amending formula was so great that a compromise could not be reached. The Statute of Westminster passed in 1931, granting Canada her formal independence, but with the power to amend the constitution still in British hands.

In domestic politics, King agreed to establish federal old-age pensions, provided that the provinces pay half. However, as the economic depression of the 1930's hit not just Quebec but the entire country, it became more and more clear that the weak federal government, with its lack of legislative power over road networks, education, allowances and railroads was unable to enact strong policies to counter the economic crisis.⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ As these concerns threatened to come to a head, the spectre of war once again loomed over Canadian society. In response, King initiated a rearmament program, but avoided other steps which might entangle Canada in European affairs again and turned away European refugees of the Hitler regime.⁵⁷ King's caution did little, in the end, to stop Canada from entering yet another European conflict when in 1939 Britain declared war. Although this time there was an official separate declaration of war from the Canadian parliament, this declaration still required the King's signature, a sign of the complicated situation that constituted Canadian sovereignty.

A new world war brought with it a new opportunity for a conscription crisis, but King was aware of the political cost the previous crisis had wrought and in 1939 promised to a Quebec

⁵⁴ Ibid, 186.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 209.

⁵⁶ Ouellet, "The Historical Background of Separatism in Quebec," 61.

⁵⁷ Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 214.

crowd that there would be no compulsory military service.⁵⁸ Yet as the war progressed and manpower demands became more and more pressing, this promise became more and more untenable. King's solution was to hold a public vote asking that the government be released from her promise to not enact conscription legislation. Sixty-four percent of Canadian voted in favour of the possibility of conscription, with only Quebec voting against.⁵⁹ Much like in the previous war, actual conscripts were only sent overseas in the very final stages of the conflict (in late 1944), and they made very little difference in the outcome of the war.⁶⁰ Again, the effect of compulsory military service had been to alienate and anger French Canadian nationalists, but this time the political crisis had been much less severe, as "King retained the support of the majority of Quebec federal MP's for what was clearly a reluctant decision on his part."⁶¹

By the end of the war, two distinct nationalisms had crystallized. French Canadian nationalism, fuelled by the bitter experiences of the two conscription crises and the economical hardships of the interwar period, thrived in Quebec. Although it had always been a feature of French Canadian political thought, Catholicism and ultramontane beliefs became a guiding force following the first World War, and would remain firmly entrenched in French Canadian life throughout the fifteen-year reign of Maurice Duplessis' Union Nationale government of Quebec. Their hold on Quebec politics was not to be broken until the Quiet Revolution of the 60's and 70's, when Quebec public life was secularized and referenda on Quebec (associated) sovereignty were held, and the name 'Quebec nationalism' became the commonly used term.

Outside of Quebec, the 'other' Canadian nationalism also thrived. While little remained of a British empire to rile against, and the prospect of political annexation by the United States became less and less likely, the fear of American cultural annexation and absorption remained and even grew in the postwar period. Gad Horowitz, convinced of the threat of Americanization, warned in 1967: "the prospect of total economic and cultural integration into American society,

⁵⁸ Philip Alfred Buckner, *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008): 109.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 110.

⁶⁰ Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 227.

⁶¹ Buckner, *Canada and the British Empire*, 105.

is real and immediate.”⁶² Against this background of fear of assimilation, and with a revised Immigration Act again facilitating large-scale immigration to Canada in order to meet labour demands, there was a call for a common Canadian identity and Canadian unity. It is this call which the Liberal party’s ideology of Canadian nationalism intended to answer in the postwar years.

Quebec nationalists were not the only opponents of the nationalism of the postwar Liberal Canadian governments. Seen by many as the defining text on Canadian nationalism, George Grant’s seminal essay *Lament for a Nation* appeared in 1965 to both acclaim and derision, and its proclamation of the death of Canadian nationalism inspired fierce debate on the meaning and history of Canadian identity.⁶³ In the essay, Grant, who was the grandson of George M. Grant, the imperial federalist, argues that the electoral defeat of Conservative PM John Diefenbaker in 1963 marked the end of Canadian nationalism. According to Grant, Diefenbaker’s government, which Grant calls “the strident swan-song of [nationalist] hope”,⁶⁴ was tasked with preventing the disappearance of Canadian independence which was a natural consequence of the Liberal party’s policies in the post-war years. That Diefenbaker failed to do this, in Grant’s estimation, meant the end of Canadian nationalism.

Grant’s view of Canadian nationalism was based on a populist conception of Canada as a nation of British character, formed by the ‘little man’ and defeated by the technological and economic might of the United States. The “economic implications of Canadian nationalism”, Grant argues, were that “after 1940, nationalism had to go hand in hand with some measure of socialism.”⁶⁵ In response to this position, Horowitz coined the term ‘Red Tory’ to describe Conservatives like Grant who feel that “socialism is a variant of conservatism”,⁶⁶ and see

⁶² Gad Horowitz, “Tories, Socialists and the Demise of Canada, And On the Fear of Nationalism” in *Canadian Political Thought*, ed. H.D. Forbes (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985): 364.

⁶³ Peter C. Emberley, “Afterword.” in *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, George Grant (Ottawa, Carleton University Press, 1978): 99.

⁶⁴ George P. Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Ottawa, Carleton University Press, 1978): 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 15.

⁶⁶ Horowitz, “Tories, Socialists, and the Demise of Canada,” 354.

economic planning as a necessity in order to maintain stability and preserve a conservative Canadian identity. Horowitz recognized and agreed with Grant's determination that Canadian nationalism was at risk, but felt that Grant's pessimism would guarantee nationalism's death, and argued that instead "the nation building role must now be played by forces other than those of entrenched wealth - popular sources with democratic socialist leaders who know where they are going."⁶⁷

The Liberal government leaders of the post-war period largely did not subscribe to Grant's notion of Canadian nationalism. Investments in projects such as the St Lawrence Seaway, the Trans-Canada Highway and various pipeline developments were perhaps causing greater entanglement of Canada and the United States in a continental economy, but they were also bringing prosperity to the country.⁶⁸ Under the economic leadership of C.D. Howe, American investment was actively courted, while restoring trade relationships with Britain was not deemed a priority: the imperial connection was well and truly severed. Furthermore, Grant's conceptualization of the Canadian identity as being inherently Anglo-Saxon, agrarian and English-speaking was challenged by the Liberal government's increasing commitment to official bilingualism and the inclusion of other ethnic groups. Louis St Laurent, King's Francophone successor as prime minister, characterized postwar Canada as "a union of two great races that have joined their talents without merging their identities. The union includes peoples of many other national origins ... there is an ever deepening sense of community of interest and of purpose."⁶⁹

A clear indication of this growing interest in cultivating a Canadian identity which transcended ethnic and language barriers was the establishment of what is now known as the Massey Commission in 1959. This commission, officially titled *the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences*, was headed by Governor General Vincent Massey and its mandate was to investigate the state of the cultural sector in Canada in

⁶⁷ Ibid, 359.

⁶⁸ Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 241.

⁶⁹ Louis St Laurent, *Address by Rt. Hon. Louis S. St-Laurent, Prime Minister of Canada, on the occasion of the entry of Newfoundland into Confederation as a Province of Canada*, (Ottawa, Office of the Prime Minister, 1949): par 5, URL: <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/primeministers/h4-4031-e.html>.

order to “give encouragement to institutions which express national feeling, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of Canadian life, rural as well as urban.”⁷⁰ In the 400-page report which concluded the commission’s work, the commission describes its task as one of finding ‘true Canadianism’ in the arts and letters which it says present “the foundations of national unity.”⁷¹ It determined that in order to foster this true Canadianism, more funding for cultural matters was crucial, and established that this increased funding could be justified because building a distinctly Canadian cultural sector was a useful tool in the nation-building endeavour.

The mandate for the Massey commission is an example of the conception of Canadian identity and the form of nationalism which the Canadian Liberal party espoused in the two decades post-WWII. This form of nationalism was focused on creating a distinctive identity for Canada, one that was not linked to the British empire, the Catholic church or to the various other homelands of the increasingly diverse Canadian population. However, this nationalism was not necessarily to be attained by removing existing links between ethnic populations and their motherlands and requiring assimilation into ‘Canadian’ (Anglo-Saxon) society. Rather, it aimed to create a national identity through the absorption of new Canadians’ cultural customs into the larger Canadian identity. An example of this ideal can be found in the Liberal Party’s speaker guide for the 1963 national election campaign, which quotes leader Lester Pearson as saying “the contributions of new Canadians from old races has added strength and colour and vitality to the pattern of our national life. it has enriched Canadianism by qualities inherited from the old and noble traditions and cultures of other lands.”⁷² The guide includes a call for an academic assessment of the status and future of the ‘two founding races’ in Canada, the French and the English, and notes that a study would also need to take into account the contributions made by those other than the English and French, and determine how their role could be broadened and

⁷⁰ *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, & Sciences, 1949–1951* (Ottawa, King’s Printer, 1951): xi. URL: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/2/5/index-e.html>.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 271.

⁷² Liberal Speaker’s Guide, 1963 Campaign, “Equal Partners in Confederation”, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 103 “Election 1963. Strategy”, Library and Archives Canada: 4.

enlarged, which the Liberal Party deemed vital to the continued development of Canada as a nation.

The liberal Canadian nationalism which came into itself in the 1950s, then, does not fit the popular definition of the term ‘nationalism’, which emphasizes ethnic, linguistic and cultural unity and encourages discrimination against and removal of rights from those who are not included in the ‘group’ or nation. Nationalism itself is, at its broadest, “political activity seeking to create a more congruent or symbiotic relationship between the state and the nation so as to bind the state to the nation’s will and to entrust the state with sustaining the nation’s way of life”.⁷³ Yet this definition does not touch upon the actual ideology which would inform this political activity: what is ‘the nation’? Who belongs to this group? Who does not? Is the nation a linguistic, cultural or ethnic unit or perhaps all three? Anthony Smith, in his *Theories of Nationalism*, attempts to answer these questions by distinguishing between ethnic and territorial nationalisms.⁷⁴ The former, according to Smith, start with a homogenous group, the *ethnie*, which shares a culture and what Walker Connor terms an ‘ancestral relatedness’, and whose goal is to attain independence in order to achieve cultural ends. Through the process of vernacular mobilization, the *ethnie*’s intelligentsia identify shared cultural and historical myths which are accepted by the greater public and form the basis of a shared state. Territorial nationalism, the latter, is defined by the shared territory of the nation. Smith argues that it is formed through bureaucratic incorporation by the state. Territorial nationalism’s ‘top-down’ imposition of the national identity upon a people leads to a more ‘civic’ identity, rather than the more ‘cultural’ identity which is formed through the ethnic nationalist process, but it is still based on the existence of some shared ethnic characteristics.⁷⁵

The liberal Canadian nationalism of the 1950s fits neither of Smith’s categories. Certainly there was no singular *ethnie* with a shared ‘ancestral relatedness’ to speak of, and although one might argue that the nation-building efforts of the Canadian government post-confederation fit

⁷³ Chennells, *The Politics of Nationalism in Canada*, 5.

⁷⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London, Duckworth, 1971).

⁷⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A critical survey of recent theories of nation and nationalism* (London, Routledge, 1998): 193.

the characteristics of the ‘bureaucratic incorporation’ process, Smith’s territorial nationalism still operates from the basis of the “transformation of a loose, aristocratic ethnies into a territorial nation”.⁷⁶ Smith himself acknowledged that states such as Canada and the US did not fit these criteria, as they are formed from fragments of other ethnies.⁷⁷

A more promising paradigm for defining 1950s liberal Canadian nationalism is that of civic nationalism, which shares with Smith’s territorial nationalism a focus on the apparatus of the state in the creation of a national identity over a shared cultural or linguistic heritage. According to Michael Ignatieff (who in addition to his work as a historian has held the post of leader of the Liberal Party), civic nationalism “maintains that the nation should be composed of all those -regardless of race, colour, creed, gender, language, or ethnicity - who subscribe to the nation’s political creed”.⁷⁸ It emphasizes the attachment of citizens to their democratic institutions, and the accompanying democratic values, as the basis of a shared citizenship and a shared identity. While many aspects of civic nationalism indeed apply to the Canadian postwar liberal nationalism, mainly its inclusivity and lack of reliance on shared ethnic values, it disregards the linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds of the nation’s population, thereby overlooking the importance of these backgrounds in the formation of Canadian nationalism. Customs, languages, myths and symbols are adopted from the various ethnic and religious groups which make up Canadian society and made part of the larger Canadian national identity, a process which is disregarded in civic nationalism, where “[i]mmigrants and national minorities must only integrate into a common “political culture” unified around ... constitutional principles”.⁷⁹

David Chennells has posed a dual definition of nationalism which uses the goal of the nationalist movement, rather than its composition, as a means of classification. He distinguishes between inclusive and exclusive nationalism, with the latter defined as “nationalist political

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 194.

⁷⁸ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into New Nationalism* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993): 6.

⁷⁹ Anna Stiliz, “Civic Nationalism and Language Policy” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35, no. 3 (2009): 258, DOI:10.1111/j.1088-4963.2009.01160.x

activity ... of a kind that seeks to privilege one recognizable way of life over others, in the sense of imposing it and intentionally altering the balance present among adherents of various real communities of religion, language, or culture.”⁸⁰ Exclusivity, Chennells notes, does not mean that any person who does not meet the criterium of membership of the privileged group is barred altogether (although that may be the case), but rather that all who wish to be part of the nation must conform to the way of life of the privileged group.

Inclusivity, or inclusive nationalism, is not as clearly defined by Chennells, as in his work, which focuses on exclusive nationalism, it arises only as a residual. Chennells simply notes that inclusive nationalism must either define the way of life which it wants to promote so vaguely that it does not exclude any group, or that it would support various ways of life but would not privilege one over the other. The second, I argue, describes the liberal Canadian nationalism of the 1950s, with its focus on creating a pluralistic Canadian identity. Building upon Chennells’ description, I define inclusive nationalism as *nationalist political activity of a kind that seeks to equitably foster a multitude of ways of life, including religious, cultural or linguistic expressions, based on a shared commitment to a pluralistic national identity.*

⁸⁰ Chennells, *The Politics of Nationalism in Canada*, 7.

Chapter Two - J.W. Pickersgill: Civil Servant, Politician, Nationalist

The name J.W. Pickersgill means little to most ordinary Canadians, but the influence of this government official, mostly unknown to the general public, was all but small. After his death, fellow Liberal and civil servant Mitchell Sharp declared that Jack Pickersgill had been “an extraordinarily important person in this country for an extraordinarily long time.”⁸¹ During Prime Minister St Laurent’s term in office, the mantra in Ottawa was to “clear it with Jack”, and in 1951 senator Tom Crerar wrote that Pickersgill probably had “as much to do with determining policy in many matters as most of the Ministers have.”⁸² Later, after Pickersgill left the civil service to enter public life as an elected MP, he became known as a deeply partisan politician, who competently headed the Immigration and Citizenship department as well as the ministry for Transport, with a short period in between as a political gadfly during the Diefenbaker years in which the Conservative party governed. Prime Minister Diefenbaker, for his part, grudgingly proclaimed that “parliament without Pickersgill would be like hell without the devil.”⁸³ Although Pickersgill never rose above the rank of senior minister, he influenced policy in numerous areas throughout his 30-year career in public life. He had strong personal convictions on topics of Canadian nationhood, identity, and on the role of the civil servant in government and carried out these convictions throughout his career.

In this chapter, I will give a short biography of Pickersgill, describe his place within the Liberal party leadership, the Civil service ‘mandarinate’, and the Liberal party governments in the various functions which he fulfilled, and elaborate further on his views on Canadian nationalism. Through examining Pickersgill’s influence and roles within the public sphere, an image is created of a person whose beliefs were characteristic of the Liberal crowd which dominated much of federal politics during and immediately after the second World War. Analyzing his ideology of Canadian nationalism, as espoused in his writings, letters and

⁸¹ Anthony Wilson-Smith, “A Man of Influence,” *Maclean’s*, 24 November 1997: 86.

⁸² Quoted. in Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 220.

⁸³ Wilson-Smith, “A Man of Influence,” 87

speeches, gives insight into a phase of Canadian nationalism which preceded official multiculturalism and non-assimilationism but already shows many of the inclusive characteristics of that later policy.

Jack Whitney Pickersgill was born in Weycombe, Ontario in 1905, to a family of English traditional Conservatives. At age 6 he moved from Ontario to Ashern, Manitoba with his family. It was there, in a small town filled with immigrant Canadians from all walks of life, that Pickersgill's political beliefs began to take form. In his autobiography *My Years with Louis St Laurent*, he states that "if my family had stayed on an Ontario farm, I might have remained a Conservative".⁸⁴ Instead, young Pickersgill was brought up in a fast-growing rural community which contained both 'old' Canadians, French and English, looking to homestead out west, as well as 'new' immigrant Canadians from West and Eastern Europe. This experience, he explained in a 1955 speech on immigration, convinced Pickersgill that

"the children and the grandchildren of the immigrants from the continent of Europe who live on the western plains today are just as deeply attached to Canada, and just as proud of Canada, as the farmers of Quebec who have lived for three centuries on the same piece of land, or as the farmers of Ontario who are still farming the Loyalist grants they received before the end of the 18th century."⁸⁵

Despite his later staunch liberal convictions, Pickersgill recalls being on the side of the conscriptionists during the outbreak of the first World War. His father, who supported the Conservatives, was stationed in France with the army and this led the young Pickersgill to rally for compulsory military service. French Canadians who did not want to serve overseas were slackers who lacked patriotism, he felt, and the pull of conservative imperialism was still so strong even after the war, that he recalled being 'shocked' when his father told Pickersgill in late 1919 that had he been forced to choose, he would have chosen Canada over the Empire.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 4.

⁸⁵ J.W. Pickersgill, "Canadian Citizenship", address to the Kiwanis Club of Montreal, 30 June 1955, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 272, file 7, "Speeches", Library and Archives Canada: 10.

⁸⁶ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 5.

An important factor in changing Pickersgill's negative outlook towards French Canadians was learning the French language. Although there was only a one-room school in the village of Ashern with no official French tutor, Pickersgill's mother managed to secure French language lessons from an Acadian family who would tutor the boy in return for free milk from the Pickersgill farm. Pickersgill's appreciation for the French language and culture grew from there, and when he was admitted to the University of Manitoba to study history there, he devoted himself to learning the language so that when his studies were finished, he was, according to his own assessment, almost as proficient in written French as he was in written English.⁸⁷ This fluency in French would serve him well later in his career, and also appears to have aided his understanding of, although certainly not agreement with, the position of the Quebec *nationalistes*: "we took a great deal of interest in the nationalist movement in Quebec, and had complete sympathy with the nationalist view that Canada should be wholly independent".⁸⁸

After Pickersgill graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1927, he moved to England to pursue two years of graduate studies at Oxford, and it was there that his conversion from Conservative to Liberal was completed. Seeing Canada from the outside and experiencing English society up close made him "understand what [his] father had meant about putting Canada before the Empire",⁸⁹ and encouraged, through the appreciation of what he perceived as the distinct character of the Canadian nation, the development of his nationalist beliefs. In describing his change of political allegiance, Pickersgill compared himself to a religious convert; he did not feel that he was rebelling against an established order but rather gradually being inducted into the Liberal party creed through his growing disillusionment with the Conservative party. If it had been a rebellious move, Pickersgill said, he would have become a socialist instead.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ J.W. Pickersgill, "The Character of the Canadian Nation", address to the Richelieu Club of Shawinigan Falls, 11 March 1954, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 272, file 4, "Speeches", Library and Archives Canada: 7.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 6.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

The move towards official membership of the Liberal party constituted a final rejection of imperialism for Pickersgill, who instead fully embraced Canadian nationalism. Influenced by Arthur Lower, his colleague at Wesley College in Winnipeg where he had taken a post as a history lecturer, Pickersgill became more and more certain in his belief that Canada should be extracted fully from British control. Lower, who would become Pickersgill's lifelong friend, held radically nationalist views, so radical that even the by now self-described 'ardent nationalist' Pickersgill was considered to be 'soft on Empire' compared to Lower.⁹¹ During the eight years in which Pickersgill and Lower worked together, they shared an office, taught courses together and discussed Canadian history and politics at length, and in 1934, together with Lower's wife, they went on a trip to the United States. This outing to the country which Pickersgill had previously regarded as "merely a motor corridor between Winnipeg and Toronto"⁹² further entrenched Pickersgill's belief that Canada was a nation which, despite the vast distances which separated its population, could come together and form a comprehensible society.⁹³

Although Pickersgill enjoyed teaching and academic life, the salary of a junior history lecturer in 1936 was so low that he struggled to support his wife, whom he had wed that year.⁹⁴ Combined with the lack of possibilities for him to advance ranks at Wesley College, this made Pickersgill decide to take the civil service examinations. In 1937, these examinations consisted of a written and oral portion and Pickersgill impressed in both; he placed first of all Department of External Affairs candidates in the written tests and his interview went exceptionally well, with his French proficiency in particular impressing the interviewers.⁹⁵ In the fall of 1937, Pickersgill joined the Department of External Affairs as a third secretary, and after only a few months he was assigned to the Prime Minister's Office by O.D. Skelton, Under-Secretary of External Affairs. Although this was the beginning of a close working relationship between Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Pickersgill, the first few months of the latter's assignment to the PM's

⁹¹ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 210.

⁹² Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 7.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 212.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

office consisted of low-level work keeping track of committee meetings and the developments surrounding the newly established Dominion-Provincial Relations Commission.⁹⁶ It wasn't until King's assistant private secretary, Edward Pickering, resigned in July 1938 that Pickersgill actually began working under the direct guidance of King, first as Pickering's interim replacement and later as second secretary under the new private secretary Arnold Heeney. King was notoriously hard to please, placing high demands on his staff, and never felt truly supported by his office staff.⁹⁷ ⁹⁸ Pickersgill was able to anticipate King's demands, and his position gradually morphed to encompass political advice, speechwriting and even assisting in election campaigns. King, having recognized that Pickersgill's political opinions, especially regarding colonial relations, were very much in line with his, increasingly relied on, as he put it, Pickersgill's "judgement as a young man".⁹⁹

During the second World War, Pickersgill served under Walter Turnbull as King's second private secretary, where his work "touched on almost every aspect of domestic politics and war policy".¹⁰⁰ Pickersgill opposed the war measure of conscription, to an extent that irritated King even though he agreed on the topic, leading King to complain in his diary that Pickersgill was "excessively nationalistic".¹⁰¹ In fact, although Pickersgill excelled at most of his duties, thriving under the hard work, he struggled with his role as a civil servant. His strong liberal convictions, especially on the topic of Canadian nationalism, combined with his lack of fear in speaking up to King in a way that other aides such as Heeney would not, led him to the limit of his position; he worked on political questions which other civil servants would not touch.¹⁰² Although he had initially been reluctant to appear highly partisan in a role which was officially non-political, the

⁹⁶ Ibid, 214.

⁹⁷ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 214

⁹⁸ John C. Courtney, "Prime Ministerial Character: An Examination of Mackenzie King's Political Leadership," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 9, no. 1 (March 1976): 93-4.

⁹⁹ King quoted in Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 215.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 216.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 217.

¹⁰² Ibid, 215

fervour of Pickersgill's political beliefs quickly won out over his reservations and did not shy away from expressing his opinions on political, national and international matters.

In 1945 Turnbull left the PM's Office, and Pickersgill succeeded him as its head, although he did not do so without changing the title of the post from Principal Secretary to Special Assistant to the Prime Minister in an attempt to "leave the administration of the office and the public contracts of a Secretary to others."¹⁰³ When Louis St Laurent replaced King as prime minister two years later, Pickersgill served in much the same capacity to the new prime minister, whom he "felt personally committed to in a way [he] had never felt committed to Mackenzie King."¹⁰⁴ Pickersgill believed that the national feeling of unity would be improved by having a French-speaking prime minister like St Laurent, and the new PM shared Pickersgill's "own aspirations for the future of Canada."¹⁰⁵ St Laurent came to rely on Pickersgill's aid to a larger extent even than King had, leaving him to sort out the details of his election campaign as well as the daily organization of the Office, to the point where to get something done, one had to 'clear it with Jack'.¹⁰⁶

Pickersgill rose to this position of influence within the Prime Minister's Office partly due to his ability to anticipate the demands of those in whose service he worked, but also because he fit neatly into the highly educated, well-connected group of what Granatstein terms 'civil service mandarins'. These men, although selected through a merit-based system of civil service examinations, almost invariably fit this description put forward by Christina Newman: "born of WASP parents in the early years of the century, very often in a small town in Ontario or Manitoba, received his undergraduate education at Oxford, often on a Rhodes scholarship, came strongly under the influence of Lord Keynes, was noticed by Clark or Skelton and induced to come to Ottawa in the sixties."¹⁰⁷ Pickersgill in fact received a graduate degree rather than an

¹⁰³ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 28.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 50.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁶ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 220.

¹⁰⁷ Newman quoted in *ibid*, 17.

undergraduate degree at Oxford, but clearly this was not enough to discourage his adoption into the mandarin.

This highly influential group of civil servants shared a common belief in what Porter has called “Canada’s major political and intellectual obsession, national unity”,¹⁰⁸ and worked closely together to levy their power at the various departments which they served to create an efficient and far-reaching civil service apparatus. The result was the creation of a “public service that not only had the support and respect of the nation, but also was seen as a body that could clearly function in the broad national interest in a way in which partisan politicians appeared incapable.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, Pickersgill was part of a network of civil servants who efficiently utilized their executive power to engage in nation-building, shaping policy in areas such as finance, foreign affairs, and federal-provincial relations.

While Pickersgill admired St Laurent and enjoyed his position in the Prime Minister’s Office as part of the mandarin, he began to feel uneasy about his future in the civil service should St Laurent retire. In order to secure a position which did not depend on the Liberals being in power, Pickersgill decided to leave the Prime Minister's Office, and in 1952 he was appointed Clerk of the Privy Council, the highest ranking civil servant post. The new appointment was a significant change for Pickersgill. He had to drop all partisan activities, although he could remain an adviser to St Laurent, something which he struggled with, finding it “impossible not to be drawn into discussions of political matters with Members of Parliament who had been in the habit of consulting me about political problems”.¹¹⁰ That same year, a small controversy erupted when Pickersgill accompanied St Laurent on a tour of Western Canada; at a tour stop in Winnipeg there were no rooms available for the prime minister, which angered Pickersgill and later led him to complain about the staff’s treatment, after which the hotel manager was fired. Pickersgill felt he had done no wrong and later claimed that he had not called for the manager’s firing, but the opposition was infuriated and criticized Pickersgill harshly, insinuating that the

¹⁰⁸ John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1965): 369.

¹⁰⁹ Luc Julliet and Ken Rasmussen, *Defending a Contested Ideal: Merit and the Public Service Commission, 1908-2008* (Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 2008): 70.

¹¹⁰ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 175.

government was interfering in private business.¹¹¹ If Pickersgill had been somewhat controversial as head of the Prime Minister's Office, the *Montreal Gazette* proclaimed in a 1952 article, he had only become more so with his appointment to the Privy Council.¹¹² The scandal made Pickersgill realize his position was untenable in the long term; he felt frustrated, even humiliated, that as a public servant he was not able to defend his actions in parliament, and the opposition was not likely to let up on their criticism of him.¹¹³ ¹¹⁴ A solution came in the unlikely form of the Newfoundland constituency Bonavista-Twillingate.

In 1946, talks had begun in earnest about Newfoundland, which was a dominion of England at the time and had been under self-rule until the Great Depression, joining Canada as its tenth province. In his then-position as St Laurent's aide while the former was acting prime minister, Pickersgill met with Newfoundland National Convention leader Joey Smallwood, and declared that he would help Smallwood in any way possible to bring about confederation with Canada.¹¹⁵ It was "the beginning of a political association between Smallwood and [Pickersgill] which lasted twenty years."¹¹⁶ Pickersgill had long been an advocate of Newfoundland's joining the Canadian union; in a 1954 speech he declared that he had "hoped for and dreamed of the completion of Confederation when I was a school boy".¹¹⁷ For a number of months in 1947, discussions were held between Newfoundland representatives and the Canadian government regarding terms of joining the Canadian union, and finally they were agreed upon in November of that year. A referendum was held in which the vote for confederation received a 52 per cent majority, and in March 1949 Newfoundland officially joined the Dominion of Canada, much to Pickersgill's delight.

¹¹¹ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 222.

¹¹² Arthur Blakely, "Outward Bound?" *Montreal Gazette*, 3 December 1952, newspaper clipping, in J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 2, "General Correspondence", Library and Archives Canada.

¹¹³ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, 222.

¹¹⁴ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 178.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 77.

¹¹⁶ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 77.

¹¹⁷ J.W. Pickersgill, notes for speech to the Rotary Club of St John's, Newfoundland, 19 August 1954, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 272, file 4, "Speeches", Library and Archives Canada.

Pickersgill retained his connection with Joey Smallwood, and when in 1953 the former found himself in need of a constituency to be elected to, Smallwood offered a solution. The minister for Newfoundland and Secretary of State, Liberal MP Gordon Bradley, was retiring to the Senate and there was no obvious successor in Parliament at that time. Pickersgill, who had never been to Newfoundland despite his active support for confederation, was skeptical that a ‘mainlander’ would prove acceptable to the people of Newfoundland as their representative in Parliament, but Smallwood was adamant that it could be done, and suggested that Pickersgill run for MP for Bonavista-Twillingate.¹¹⁸ The constituency, Smallwood ensured Pickersgill, was certain to vote Liberal and with Smallwood’s support, Pickersgill would only have to campaign in Newfoundland for a few days in order to be elected, leaving him free to manage St Laurent’s campaign for re-election for the remainder of the time.¹¹⁹ Pickersgill remained that it was a “very risky undertaking”¹²⁰ but agreed to run in Newfoundland, where he campaigned for a total of three days before joining St Laurent in Montreal for a whistle-stop tour of Canada. When the election results came in, the Liberals retained their majority, and Pickersgill had been voted in as MP for Bonavista-Twillingate, the constituency which he would come to represent for the next fourteen years.

After the election, Pickersgill had four main duties; he was minister for Newfoundland, Secretary of State (a mostly administrative post in Canada), a member of parliament, and finally he was expected to assist St Laurent in his duties. No longer a public servant, Pickersgill was able to carry out his partisan views without being accused of impropriety. As Secretary of State, he headed a mostly administrative department which oversaw institutions such as the printing office, the patents office and the public archives. However, St Laurent soon asked him to take on a senior department by becoming minister of Citizenship and Immigration in a cabinet shuffle. Pickersgill accepted and took over the ministry in July 1954. In two years, Pickersgill had gone

¹¹⁸ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 182.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 198.

from a public servant to head of a major ministry, and for the first time, he felt that he had a career of his own, instead of playing a supporting role.¹²¹

When Pickersgill became its head, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration was only four years old, and Pickersgill's predecessor Walter Harris had been its very first minister. In fact, Canadian citizenship itself had not formally existed until the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946; before this time, Canadians were considered a subset of British subjects. Before the creation of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, responsibility for immigration policy had been shuffled around various federal institutions, with at different times the Department of the Interior, the Department of Immigration and Colonization and the Department of Mines and Resources shouldering responsibility for the enforcement of immigration policies. After the end of the Second World War, instead of slipping back into the recession which had plagued the Canadian economy, post-war spending booms led to a workforce shortage, and pressure from the business sector to increase immigration had built rapidly.¹²² Mckenzie King quickly bowed to the pressure and announced in 1947 that Canada would follow a new immigration policy aimed at achieving a significant population increase in order to fuel economic growth.¹²³ While the policy was designed to encourage immigration, it did not alter the discriminatory 'selective immigration policies' already in place, with Asian would-be immigrants in particular virtually banned. King defended this policy thus: "Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens [...] large-scale immigration from the Orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population."¹²⁴ In order to facilitate the selection and admission of immigrants on a large scale, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration was established in 1950.

When Pickersgill took over the department in 1954, all British subjects from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland were admissible to Canada, and citizens from

¹²¹ Ibid, 231.

¹²² Harold Troper, "Canada's Immigration Policy Since 1945," *International Journal* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 258.

¹²³ Alan G. Green and David Green. "The Goals of Canada's Immigration Policy: Historical Perspectives," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 13, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 112.

¹²⁴ Quoted in *ibid*.

Northern and Western European countries were also admissible if they did not exceed a posed limit, which was based on the ‘absorptive capacity’ of Canadian society. Immigration from non-European countries, while not technically prohibited save for Chinese immigration, was virtually impossible. Pickersgill explained the lack of non-European immigration as stemming from administrative difficulties: “it was difficult for immigrants from the rest of the world to come to Canada because there were almost no facilities for examining applicants in most countries.”¹²⁵ In fact, however, there was a concerted effort to exclude all but a limited few immigrants from countries beyond Europe, with almost no non-white immigrants admitted save for a small number of Pakistanis, Indians and Sri Lankans from the Commonwealth partners,¹²⁶ as well as a few dozen cases each month where individuals from non-European countries were admitted on ‘compassionate grounds’ through an Order in Council.

Pickersgill supported the immigration restrictions in place, and believed that the discriminatory immigration policies as set forward by King in 1947 were necessary in order to maintain balance in Canadian society. In his autobiography, he recalled defending the policy against its critics (whose case for ‘immigration without discrimination’ he called ‘plausible’) by pointing out that admitting too many of a certain group of immigrants might cause “undesirable tensions and strains [which] would not be of benefit to Canada or to the immigrants themselves”.¹²⁷

One aspect of the regulations which Pickersgill did take issue with was the reference in the Immigration act to the ‘Asiatic race’ which stated that those of Asian ethnic origin could not be admitted to Canada. When changes to the immigration regulations were being drafted, Pickersgill recommended the removal of this reference, and in 1956 it was eliminated from the regulations. The removal, Pickersgill wrote, meant that “geography and citizenship, not race, became the basis of selection, and it was no easier for a white or a black South African to be admitted as an immigrant than a South African of Asian origin.”¹²⁸ This was a departure, then,

¹²⁵ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 232.

¹²⁶ Troper, “Canada’s Immigration Policy Since 1945,” 263.

¹²⁷ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 241.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 240.

from official racially based immigration selection but not a departure from the selective immigration policies as a whole, which would remain in place throughout Pickersgill's term as minister. Some other changes Pickersgill made included ending the automatic refusal of immigration requests made by Armenians and Lebanese, and setting up a scheme for the admission of a few hundred female West Indian domestic servants between 1956 and 1957.

During a 1955 Liberal rally in Victoria, Pickersgill caused a controversy when he was quoted in news reports as saying that no immigrant was "as good as another Canadian baby".¹²⁹ This statement caused an uproar, with opposition parties asking questions in parliament and ethnic organizations across Canada criticizing Pickersgill. One such organization, the Baltic Federation in Canada, sent Pickersgill a letter asking him to explain his remarks as his "attitude towards immigrants and New Canadians has not implied that [he] consider[ed] New Canadians second-rate citizens."¹³⁰ In response, Pickersgill clarified that he did not mean to say that New Canadians were of any less merit than Canadian-born citizens, but rather that a 'Canadian baby' was preferable only because "the immigrant has to learn to be a Canadian and the baby is a Canadian to start with".¹³¹

Pickersgill's self-declared preference for 'Canadian babies' echoes the Liberal party's postwar ambivalence to easing immigration restrictions. The economic boom of the postwar years coupled with low birth rates during the depression and the second World War had caused a significant shortage of both skilled and unskilled labor, a shortage to which increased immigration might present a solution. Furthermore, Canada's increased role in the postwar international environment, especially its involvement in the proposal of a form of the Commonwealth as a multi-racial alliance and several United Nations peacekeeping missions, led

¹²⁹ Ibid, 236.

¹³⁰ Letter from Ed Riisna to J.W. Pickersgill, 20 April 1955, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 272, file 9, "Victoria, British Columbia. 12 April 1955. Newspaper clippings, correspondence.", Library and Archives Canada.

¹³¹ Letter from J.W. Pickersgill to Ed Riisna, 21 April 1955, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 272, file 9, "Victoria, British Columbia. 12 April 1955. Newspaper clippings, correspondence.", Library and Archives Canada.

to a call for loosening of immigration restrictions by politicians and the public alike.¹³² Yet many Liberal politicians shared Mackenzie King's reservations regarding the results of increased immigration upon the "character of the nation", and supported the discriminatory policies which remained in place until the Conservative party came to power. Pickersgill, in voicing his preference for 'Canadian babies', showed that he too shared King's reservations about immigration to some extent. Pickersgill claimed, however, to support discrimination only in immigration selection 'based on geography and citizenship'; once immigrants were admitted, he felt there should be no discrimination inside the country.¹³³

In addition to crafting and implementing immigration policies, Pickersgill was also in charge of administering the Citizenship Act. In this role, he encouraged immigrants to apply for Canadian citizenship as soon as they became eligible to do so, establishing dedicated Citizenship Courts in Toronto and Montreal to facilitate in the large-scale granting of citizenship requests. Furthermore, to encourage participation of new immigrants in Canadian society and public life, Pickersgill worked with ethnic organizations across the country, a partnership which he enjoyed immensely, calling it "one of the most agreeable features of [his] years as Minister."¹³⁴ Pickersgill's enthusiastic encouragement of participation of new immigrants in Canadian society and his efforts to promote their assumption of Canadian citizenship show his dedication to the formation of a pluralistic national identity.

In Pickersgill's many speeches to ethnic groups, he often elaborated on his view of Canadian citizenship and especially the contribution of immigrants and ethnic groups to Canadian nationhood. In a 1954 speech entitled 'The Character of the Canadian Nation', originally given in French, Pickersgill expands on his view of Canadian nationhood. He begins by asserting that Canada is not a nation in traditional terms: "If a nation is a group of people with a common homeland, with the same language, the same culture and traditions, and a large

¹³² Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998): 317.

¹³³ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 240.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 247.

measure of racial unity, we Canadians are not a nation at all.”¹³⁵ Here, Pickersgill acknowledges that there is no ‘ancestral relatedness’, no homogenous founding group, and thus no ethnies, to use Anthony Smith’s term, at the foundation of the Canadian nation. He notes that not only do Canadian citizens not share a common ancestral homeland, there is also no real assimilation of cultures and traditions upon which to base nationhood. Because of these features, it might be suggested, then, that Canada is a civic nation, whose nationhood rests upon its citizens’ shared attachment to Canada’s democratic institutions. However, Pickersgill continues in his speech: “And yet I do not think there is any doubt that most of us - more in every generation - have an attachment to this common homeland, not merely to some little corner of it, but to its whole vast extent.”¹³⁶

In fact, in an argument somewhat reminiscent of the Manifest Destiny theory of United States nationhood, Pickersgill argues that Canadian citizenship is deeply tied to Canadian land and the extensive wilderness of the Canadian prairies and northern tundras. Although Pickersgill does not imply that Canadians are destined to settle the north, an essential feature of the manifest destiny thinking in the United States, he does mention the ‘design of Confederation’, and his pride at what he calls its completion when Newfoundland joined the Canadian union. Because of this focus on the physical borders of the nation, and role which the vast and varied geography of Canadian nationhood plays in establishing Canadian nationhood, Pickersgill’s notion of Canadian citizenship and nationhood does not fit with the paradigm of civic nationalism, which prioritizes liberal democratic values as the foundation of national identity over features such as geography, language and culture. All Canadians, whether descended from settlers or recent immigrants, Pickersgill argues, “share the feeling of being explorers, pioneers, builders and creators who have had a part and are having a part in transforming the wilderness.”¹³⁷

The character of the Canadian nation, then, Pickersgill argues, is built on what he terms a common national consciousness, which he describes as existing “in a community of feeling”, adding that “we in Canada are proving to the world that it is not necessary to have only one

¹³⁵ Pickersgill, “The Character of the Canadian Nation,” 10.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

official language in order to possess a common national feeling.”¹³⁸ Pickersgill’s concept of the ‘community of feeling’ is echoed in Benedict Anderson’s theory of the imagined community, where the nation is created through an imagined political community.¹³⁹ Establishing a national identity in the face of a lack of cultural homogeneity is possible, according to Anthony Smith’s theory of national identity, when that national identity rests on “unification and identification around core values, myths, symbols and traditions, expressed in common customs and institutions, as well as a common homeland”.¹⁴⁰ This is what Pickersgill argues underlies the character of the Canadian nation: “What we have done is to create and develop a national sentiment while respecting the languages and traditions and cultures of two great races, and while sharing our nationhood with hundreds of thousands of other races whose presence has strengthened and not weakened this country.”¹⁴¹ Pickersgill encouraged the preservation of distinctive cultural identities, seeing them as part of the foundation of a ‘common national patrimony’. He articulated this in a speech given on the occasion of the dedication of the Bronfman Collection of Canadiana, a collection of Jewish Canadian artefacts in Montreal, where he expressed his hope that the collection would serve as “an inspiration to other elements our population to preserve their own distinctive literary and cultural heritage as part of the common national patrimony of our Canadian homeland.”¹⁴²

Pickersgill’s notion of Canadian nationalism, then, is one which does not rest upon ethnic, cultural or linguistic homogeneity, nor does it call for assimilation into the cultural and linguistic habits of one founding group or ethnies. It is linked to the physical boundaries of Canada and its geographical features, and posits the common Canadian experience of taming the Canadian wilderness, both by the ‘founding races’ of England and France and more recent

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, Verso Press, 1991): 6.

¹⁴⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, University of Nevada Press, 1991): 146.

¹⁴¹ Pickersgill, “The Character of the Canadian Nation,” 10.

¹⁴² J.W. Pickersgill, Speech on the occasion of the Ceremony of Dedication of the Bronfman Collection of Canadiana in the Jewish Public Library of Montreal, 13 June 1954, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 272, file 4, “Speeches”, Library and Archives Canada: 8.

immigrants, as a unifying experience which serves as a foundation for a Canadian identity. National identity, or as Pickersgill terms it, common national consciousness, is arrived at through the incorporation, though not assimilation, of distinct and varied cultural and linguistic expressions into a ‘common national patrimony’ of the Canadian homeland. It therefore fits the definition of inclusive nationalism as *nationalist political activity of a kind that seeks to equitably foster a multitude of ways of life, including religious, cultural or linguistic expressions, based on a shared commitment to a pluralistic national identity.*

To investigate how Pickersgill shaped policy to achieve this ideal of inclusive nationalism, I will examine two cases from Pickersgill’s time in office as minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Firstly, I will look at the Hungarian refugee crisis of 1956-7, when some thirty-five thousand Hungarians fled their country and came to Canada following the brutal suppression of a popular uprising. Pickersgill, as the minister responsible for immigration and refugees, was extensively involved in the process of bringing Hungarians to Canada, calling it “the most useful thing [he] did in public life”.¹⁴³ Secondly, I will examine the crisis surrounding the band membership of a group of 118 members of the Samson Cree First Nation, which largely took place in the same 1956-7 period. Pickersgill, as head of the Citizenship and Immigration department was also the head of Indian affairs (now called Indigenous and Northern Affairs), the branch of government which administered the Indian Act. When the Indian Act was amended in 1951, it included a new system for determining band membership, a band being a particular First Nations group. This new system led to the denial of official Indian status to many First Nations people who had lived on reservations and as part of an Indigenous community for their entire life. This was the case for over 100 people from the Samson Cree First Nation in Alberta. Pickersgill declined to officially involve himself in the case, pointing the Samson Cree First Nation to the courts; in his autobiography Pickersgill declares that as minister he “had no legal power to interfere with the decision of the registrar”.¹⁴⁴

These two cases are from the time period in which Pickersgill served as minister of Citizenship and Immigration, with both crises coming to a head near the end of 1956 and

¹⁴³ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 245.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 249.

continuing into 1957. They concern issues of immigration, identity, citizenship and confront the question of who belongs in Canada. Pickersgill was deeply involved in both cases, making the final decisions on policy lines and in the case of the Hungarian refugee crisis, actively lobbying in other departments and with actors outside government such as University directors. In analyzing Pickersgill's response to these two crises, I will attempt to define the extent to which the ideals of his inclusive nationalism are expressed in policy, and explore whether these ideals are applied consistently to both white Eastern-European prospective immigrants and Indigenous inhabitants of Canada.

Chapter Three - Case study: The Hungarian Refugee Crisis of 1956-1957

On October 23 1956, a student protest march against the Soviet government in Hungary swept the capital city of Budapest up into a revolutionary storm. For a short time, it looked as if the Soviet authorities would tolerate the revolutionary sentiment and allow free elections across Hungary, but on November 4, USSR troops moved into the country and began violently suppressing the national movement. This invasion, and the six days of fighting which followed, caused a stream of refugees to pour into neighbouring Austria, which in turn appealed on other states for aid, both in the form of financial assistance and in offering refugee resettlement.¹⁴⁵ Canada heeded this call, and in the following months accepted upwards of thirty-five thousand refugees.¹⁴⁶ J.W. Pickersgill, as minister of Citizenship and Immigration, was responsible for organizing the Canadian resettlement effort, and after some initial hesitation, accepted this duty with gusto. He travelled to Austria to personally oversee the erection of specific camps for refugees destined for Canada and offered them passage free of charge. After it became clear that an entire Hungarian university's forestry faculty, both students and teachers, had fled to Vienna, Pickersgill arranged for the group to come over to Canada in its entirety and continue their activities at the University of British Columbia. Other university students, too, were given priority, and Pickersgill set up a scheme to have the refugee students continue their education at various Canadian institutions as soon as they arrived.

¹⁴⁵ Marjoleine Zieck, "The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Emergency, an Early and Instructive Case of Resettlement," *Amsterdam Law Forum* 5, no. 2 (2013): pp. 45. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2293352>

¹⁴⁶ Susan Papp-Zubrits, "The Forgotten Generation: Canada's Hungarian Refugees of 1956," *Oral History* 4, no. 2 (1980): 29.

Canada's reception of Hungarian refugees is often seen as a watershed moment in Canadian immigration history,^{147 148 149} a precursor to the country's generous opening of borders to victims fleeing later conflicts. Pickersgill, on account of his decisive performance during the conflict, is seen by many, especially Hungarian Canadians, as "the principal author of the vigorous steps the Ottawa government had taken to bring Hungarian refugees to Canada."¹⁵⁰ However, as Dreisziger and Donaghy have pointed out, while humanitarian considerations certainly played a considerable role in the reception of the Hungarian refugee stream, the positive political implications for the Liberal Canadian government of the acceptance of victims of Soviet aggression, both in the domestic and international sphere, were also major factors in the Canadian response to the crisis. Pickersgill, as one of the most prominent public figures during the crisis, was not immune to these political considerations. His humanitarian reasons for aiding the Hungarian refugees, as well as his belief in the value of immigrants' cultural, linguistic and religious contributions, were certainly a contributing force to his actions in the conflict, yet the one-dimensional image of Pickersgill as an unwavering humanitarian, unselfishly working to aid the victims of tyrannical oppression which is held by some Hungarian Canadians¹⁵¹ belies a multifaceted reality. In this chapter, I will analyze Pickersgill's actions during the crisis in order to create a more nuanced image of Pickersgill's role in the conflict. In examining his response to the events of 1956 in the international context of the Cold War as well as the domestic political situation where a federal election was looming, I seek to answer the following question: how and

¹⁴⁷ Nándor Dreisziger, "The Biggest Welcome Ever: The Toronto Tories, the Ottawa Liberals, and the Admission of Hungarian Refugees to Canada in 1956," in *Hungarian Studies Review* 35, no. 1-2 (2008): 57.

¹⁴⁸ Greg Donaghy, "'An Unselfish Interest?': Canada and the Hungarian Revolution, 1954-1957," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: Canadian and Hungarian Perspectives*, ed. Christopher Adam et al. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 256.

¹⁴⁹ Gerald E. Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal and London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977): 212.

¹⁵⁰ Dreisziger, "The Biggest Welcome Ever," 42.

¹⁵¹ see for example the article by Karolyn Coorsh, "Hungarian Revolution: 60 years on: How Canada helped thousands of refugees," in *CTV News Online*, 23 December 2016, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/hungarian-revolution-60-years-on-how-canada-helped-thousands-of-refugees-1.3214231>.

to what extent does J.W. Pickersgill attempt to carry out his ideal of inclusive nationalism during the Canadian response to the Hungarian refugee crisis?

As described earlier, in the mid-1950's Canadian immigration policy was moving from a period of restriction to a more open policy, driven by increasing post-war labor needs. However, recruitment efforts were still focussed on attracting newcomers who would fit the 'character of the Canadian nation', and immigrants from outside Western Europe were only being allowed into the country in very limited numbers. After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, the Canadian government reassessed its attitude towards the Communist east, noting that the dictator's death seemed to have caused a slight thawing in relations between the Soviet Union and the west. Stalin's successors, more preoccupied with the international community's opinion than their previous leader had been, were thought to be "anxious to abandon Stalin's aggressive posturing"¹⁵² according to a 1954 widely circulated Canadian government memo. In order to move forward, head of the Department of External affairs Robert Ford argued, Canada had to accept the status quo of a Communist Eastern Europe, and hope that increased trade and relations with the Soviets would result in a softening of the Communist line. In keeping with this ambition, Ford advanced a policy of increased contact with the Soviet satellite states, with the goal of "wean[ing] them away to some degree from extreme dependence on the Soviet Union".¹⁵³

Therefore, when on October 23 the revolution finally sparked in Hungary, the Canadian government was cautiously hopeful. It supported a request for the United Nations Security Council to discuss intervention in Hungary in support of Imre Nagy, who had been reinstated to the presidency by the revolutionaries. For a number of days, it seemed as if the strategy of isolating the Soviet Union within the international community worked, allowing the Hungarian revolutionaries to end the crisis without the need for foreign intervention. However, when Soviet troops attacked the city of Budapest in a surprise maneuver on November 4, the shock was

¹⁵² Donaghy, "An Unselfish Interest?", 258.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 261.

compounded by the Suez crisis which had sprung up just days earlier, leaving the Canadian government divided in its attention and resources.¹⁵⁴

Thus, when the first calls for help in refugee support and resettlement from the Austrian authorities arrived, the Canadian government was wary. Its cautious approach to the Hungarian crisis had failed, the hoped-for leniency in the Soviet response had not materialized and the Department of External Affairs' resources were split between the crises in Eastern Europe and in Egypt. Coupled with the perceived threat of Communist spies among the refugees, and the influence of 'gate-keeping' immigration officials who were not enthusiastic about moving away from their previous policy line on Eastern European migration, this divided situation led to Austria's call for refugee aid being met with trepidation.¹⁵⁵

Pickersgill himself, despite his later assurances in his autobiography that "the only practical action Canada could take ... was to provide a refuge for some of the thousands of freedom fighters",¹⁵⁶ was initially somewhat reluctant to take action. His position as minister of a newly established ministry, staffed with immigration officials who had been shuffled around various previous departments, meant that his authority was somewhat tenuous, and he struggled at times to assert control over his department.¹⁵⁷ ¹⁵⁸ However, pressure was building on Pickersgill to act. External Affairs officials saw refugee resettlement as a way to both relieve Austria, which was already harbouring some 170,000 'old' refugees of the second World War, of its added refugee burden, and add new workers to the Canadian labor force which was sorely in need of additional manpower.¹⁵⁹ The Canadian public was also clamouring for the government to take action, its image of the Hungarian revolution shaped by the new medium of television which

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 262-3.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 264-5

¹⁵⁶ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 242.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 231

¹⁵⁸ Donaghy, "An Unselfish Interest?" 265.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 264.

provided daily coverage, showing images of young freedom fighters heroically facing off against a powerful Soviet force.¹⁶⁰

These external pressures, combined with Pickersgill's desire to help those he saw as 'freedom fighters', defeated by a brutal Communist regime, led Pickersgill to announce on November 6 that all Hungarian prospective immigrants would receive priority in the immigration process. This was not a departure from normal immigration policies in the sense that prospective immigrants would still need to meet the Immigration Act's requirements, meaning that they had to be supported by a Canadian sponsor, have a satisfactory occupation, and not be a member of the so-called 'prohibited classes' which included the permanently disabled, whether physically or mentally, unless they were able to prove that they could provide for themselves or had family who could and would do so; those who had committed crimes 'involving moral turpitude'; prostitutes and homosexuals; vagrants; persons who were likely to become public charges; drug addicts; members of 'subversive organizations'; and spies.¹⁶¹ While this priority process meant that some Hungarians who met the requirements were fast-tracked to Canada, the vast majority of the refugees either did not meet the requirements, or were not able to prove that they did because the administrative system was entirely overwhelmed.¹⁶²

As the crisis continued and only very few Hungarians were approved for immigration, Pickersgill and his department's efforts were criticized heavily. E. Davie Fulton, a leading opposition politician, remarked that "Canada should offer unlimited asylum to all those Hungarians whose efforts in the cause of liberty now force them to flee as homeless refugees."¹⁶³ Ethnic groups, churches, and much of the newspaper media pressed the government to forgo the regular immigration restrictions and offer asylum to all Hungarian refugees who wished to come

¹⁶⁰ Nándor Dreisziger, "The 1956–1957 Refugee Movement in the Context of Hungarian Immigration to Canada since the Late 19th Century," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: Canadian and Hungarian Perspectives*, ed. Christopher Adam et al. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 209.

¹⁶¹ Government of Canada, "An Act Respecting Immigration, 1952," in *Digital History - Histoire Numérique*, accessed April 1, 2019, 240-1. <https://biblio.uottawa.ca/omeka2/jmccutcheon/items/show/22>.

¹⁶² Donaghy, "An Unselfish Interest?," 267.

¹⁶³ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 194.

to Canada.¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵ Adding to the sympathy for the ‘freedom fighters’ whose struggle for democracy inspired the Canadian public was an implicit sense of guilt that Canada, along with the free west, had let down those populations struggling under Soviet rule. The Hungarians, having bravely cast off the yolk of Communist repression, could not be let down a second time.¹⁶⁶ After a few weeks of defending his department’s policy, Pickersgill relented and agreed that the immense task of vetting all prospective Hungarian immigrants on-site in the Austrian refugee camps was making it impossible to offer any meaningful aid. On November 23, he asked the Cabinet for permission to waive pre-arrival medical examinations for the Hungarian refugees, conducting these examinations in Canada after the refugees were landed instead. The Cabinet agreed with this plan, and also granted Pickersgill permission to charter all available commercial aircraft in order to airlift Hungarians to Canada as quickly as possible.¹⁶⁷

Although he had now secured Cabinet permission for a more comprehensive refugee policy to address the crisis in Austria, Pickersgill waited to announce the measures until he had conferred with representatives from the provinces as well as church groups and ethnic aid organizations, to ascertain the level of public support for a humanitarian movement. When he was informed by the representative of the Ontario provincial government, Planning minister W.M. Nickle, that Ontario was considering a direct airlift of refugees, Pickersgill decided that even more decisive action by the federal government would be necessary, lest the provinces encroach on federal authority by organizing the immigration themselves.¹⁶⁸ ¹⁶⁹ Pickersgill told Nickle that all aircraft were being chartered by the federal government and thus an Ontario-organized airlift would not be possible, and additionally there was much greater need for the provinces to provide aid to the refugees after their arrival in Canada than during their transit.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Donaghy, “An Unselfish Interest?”, 267.

¹⁶⁶ Troper, “Canada and the Hungarian Refugees,” 189.

¹⁶⁷ Donaghy, “An Unselfish Interest?”, 267.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 242.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 242.

Next, he asked Prime Minister St Laurent for permission to offer the refugees free passage to Canada (up until that point, refugees had to either pay for or take out a government loan to finance their travel overseas), and proposed to cancel all outstanding loans for those who had already made passage. In his autobiography, Pickersgill writes that St Laurent was concerned about the precedent this would create, but that the PM was convinced once Pickersgill pointed out that “unless some country acted quickly and boldly the refugees would start drifting back to Hungary”.¹⁷¹ In fact, Canada was the only government taking part in the resettlement effort not providing free transportation.¹⁷² Finance Minister Walter Harris (who had also been Pickersgill’s predecessor in serving as the first minister of Citizenship and Immigration) agreed to the plan, despite there being no cost estimate available, and it was approved by the Cabinet on November 28.

In a speech held in the House of Commons, Pickersgill set out what his deputy minister Laval Fortier called “the Magna Carta for the movement of Hungarian refugees”:¹⁷³ a passionate plea for the acceptance of the ‘freedom fighters’ into Canadian society. In the speech, Pickersgill expressed his hope that it would be possible to admit “all the people who show any interest in coming to Canada” as immigrants to Canada, where the government intended to “try to distribute them across the country” in order to both spread the financial burden of providing initial aid as well as equally provide new sources of labor the different provinces.¹⁷⁴ In the speech, Pickersgill also recalled an experience earlier that week when he had been meeting first with First Nations representatives, in his capacity as minister of Indian affairs, and next with a group of Hungarian-Canadians. As the former meeting ran somewhat late, the two groups met in Pickersgill’s office where the First Nations representatives expressed their sympathy for the Hungarian refugees’ struggles. Then, when Pickersgill’s meeting with the Hungarians was underway, the Native

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Donaghy, “An Unselfish Interest?”, 267.

¹⁷³ Stephanie Bangarth, “Migrating Magyars and Canadian Inclusiveness: Responses of the State and Voluntary Organizations to the Hungarian Refugees, 1956-1958,” in *Eger Journal of American Studies* 10 (Winter 2010): 20.

¹⁷⁴ J.W. Pickersgill, “Address,” in *Edited Hansard, Canada* (Parliament: House of Commons), 22nd Parliament, 4th session, vol. 1, 1956, 38. http://parl.canadiana.ca/view/oop.debates_HOC2205_01/436?r=0&s=1

Brotherhood president knocked on the door, offering 50 dollars to the Hungarians as a sign of their support. Framing this anecdote, Pickersgill remarked: “I am confident that if other Canadians -all the rest of us who are descendants of immigrants or immigrants themselves- do as much as these Indians, who are not very wealthy, did that day, ... we shall have no trouble absorbing all those Hungarians who are willing ... to come to Canada.”¹⁷⁵ However, in the speech Pickersgill warned that Canada did not intend to take care indefinitely of refugees who do not provide for themselves, and called for cooperation with the federal government in making the humanitarian effort a success.

This speech was generally met with approval in Parliament, although some members accused Pickersgill of not doing enough to bring over those “who have known the tragedies of communism and who are prepared to stand up and fight against it”,¹⁷⁶ as Vancouver MP Howard Green put it. It was this perception of the Hungarian refugees as freedom-seeking victims of communist oppression which played into Pickersgill’s hands. Canada, increasingly involved in the global political theatre through its participation in international organizations such as the United Nations and NATO, felt pressured to do its part in protecting the ‘free world’ from the communist threat.¹⁷⁷ Pickersgill recognized that if the Canadian response to the Hungarian crisis was perceived to be lacking this would constitute, as he put it later, “a tremendous propaganda victory for the Soviet Union.”¹⁷⁸ A vigorous and visible Canadian response was necessary to prevent such a Soviet victory.

Having secured Parliament’s permission for the waiving of medical examinations and transportation costs for Hungarians, Pickersgill began to make preparations for the large-scale transportations of Hungarians to the Canadian mainland. In order to reinforce the decision to admit as many refugees as possible, Pickersgill himself set off to Austria to report on the conditions there. Arriving in Vienna in early December, Pickersgill encountered a disorganized and understaffed immigration office, which was overwhelmed with the amount of applicants it

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Response to Pickersgill’s address by Howard Green in *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 317.

¹⁷⁸ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 242.

had to deal with. In order to facilitate better processing of prospective immigrants, Pickersgill requested the Austrian authorities to set up a separate camp for those refugees who were selected to go to Canada. Within a few days, due in part to the forgoing of medical screening, administrative procedures shortened drastically and refugees were being processed much more rapidly.¹⁷⁹

During Pickersgill's stay in Vienna, there was some confusion surrounding Canadian government authority in Austria. This confusion was caused by the fact that the Ontario government had sent its own representatives to Europe, where, as Canadian officials, they were regarded as representatives of the federal government. As Pickersgill complained, "To Austrians all Canadians are Canadians and they still can't grasp of the fact that various parts of Canada have various axes to grind."¹⁸⁰ In fact, the province of Ontario had its own distinct agenda on the topic of the humanitarian response to the Hungarian crisis. As mentioned previously, Ontario Prime Minister Leslie Frost of the Progressive Conservative Party had expressed to Pickersgill that the Ontario government intended to bring over as many refugees to Ontario as possible, through a province-organized airlift if necessary.¹⁸¹ ¹⁸² When informed by Pickersgill that the federal government was chartering airplanes to bring over refugees, effectively as one Liberal official put it "pull[ing] the carpet out from under [Frost]"¹⁸³ in ensuring that the federal government, not its political opponents, were the initiators of the humanitarian response, the government of Ontario decided it would send its own representatives to Vienna, where they arrived some days after Pickersgill. This prompted Pickersgill to complain that although Ontario promised to aid the federal government in their response, "the nearest thing to action that has been seen over here is [Ontario representative] Major Armstrong's visit".¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ John Yaremko quoted in Dreisziger, "The Biggest Welcome Ever," 75.

¹⁸⁰ Pickersgill quoted in *ibid*, 54.

¹⁸¹ Donaghy, "An Unselfish Interest?," 267

¹⁸² Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 198.

¹⁸³ Pickersgill quoted in Dreisziger, "The Biggest Welcome Ever," 52.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 54.

However, back in Ontario, public sentiment was changing, and opposition to a generous provincial offer of financial aid to the refugees was forming, especially in the more rural areas of the province.¹⁸⁵ After Armstrong and fellow provincial representative Yaremko visited Pickersgill in Bonn, where the latter had been discussing the resettlement division agreements between the various European nations, the US and Canada, Pickersgill sent a telegram to premier Frost. In it, Pickersgill reiterated that his department would direct as many refugees as possible to Ontario, and thanked Frost for “the full cooperation of the gov[ernment] of Ontario in [the] task of settling Hungarian refugees in Ontario”.¹⁸⁶ He also repeated that “the help of the Ontario gov[ernment] would urgently be needed in reception and care and settlement of these fine people”.¹⁸⁷ He then directed his deputy minister, Laval Fortier, to have the content of the telegram made available to the press, so that “our side of the story will be properly told”, stressing that the Ontario government “must not, repeat not, be allowed to shift responsibility [for the refugees arriving to Ontario] back to us.”¹⁸⁸

A dispute regarding the cost-sharing agreement between the province of Ontario and the federal government followed, revolving mainly around the question of who would pay for the refugees’ clothing and healthcare. After his return to Ottawa, Pickersgill asked Ontario for clarification on its stance regarding refugee aid, to which Ontario planning minister Nickle responded that his province expected the federal government to sponsor the arrived refugees’ clothing and other expenditures, while the province set up reception centres.¹⁸⁹ Eventually, after almost three months of back-and-forth, an agreement was reached between Ottawa and the government of Ontario, and the “jockeying for the higher moral ground”,¹⁹⁰ as Nandor

¹⁸⁵ Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 198-9.

¹⁸⁶ J.W. Pickersgill, Telegram to Leslie Frost, 6 December 1956, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 56, file 56 I-2-5545 C, “Hungarian Refugees. Ontario”, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ J.W. Pickersgill, Telegram to Laval Fortier, 6 December 1956, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 56, file 56 I-2-5545 C, “Hungarian Refugees. Ontario”, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁸⁹ J.W. Pickersgill, Letter to Leslie Frost, 18 January 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 56, file 56 I-2-5545 C, “Hungarian Refugees. Ontario”, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁹⁰ Dreisziger, “The Biggest Welcome Ever,” 56.

Dreisziger has characterized it, came to an end. The agreement stipulated that the federal government would pay the province a sum of three dollars per refugee per day to cover board and lodging, and Ottawa would also pay for healthcare and social assistance to the refugees in their first year in Canada, after which the Ontario government would provide these services.¹⁹¹

While Pickersgill was impressed with the overall ‘quality’ of the Hungarians who were moving overseas, noting that “they are extraordinarily bright looking ... [they] are way and above the average stream of immigrants that you get in ordinary times”,¹⁹² he was especially enthusiastic about the students among the Hungarian refugee streams. In fact, the official number of students among the refugee stream numbered 3000, and accounting for those who did not register as a student and who moved further out from Austria quickly, Hidas estimates that as many as 5000 students, or one-sixth of the entire university student population of Hungary, fled the country during the crisis.¹⁹³ Pickersgill, having taught history at a university himself, had a deep appreciation for education and its benefits, and saw the Hungarian students as a particularly useful addition to Canada’s population. The students of technical subjects, Pickersgill foresaw, were exactly “the kind of people we need in Canada to advance our mineral frontiers”.¹⁹⁴ He subsequently made an effort to get as many Hungarian students as possible settled in Canada. While there was no official policy giving students precedence in the immigration line, Pickersgill admits in his autobiography that he gave oral instructions to the immigration office in Vienna which selected refugees for overseas immigration to “try to get students to the head of the queue each day”.¹⁹⁵ In this way, Pickersgill felt, Canada would receive the best and brightest of the refugee pool.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 207.

¹⁹² Peter Hidas, “Arrival and Reception: Hungarian Refugees, 1956-7,” in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: Canadian and Hungarian Perspectives*, eds. Christopher Adam et al. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 230-1.

¹⁹³ Peter Hidas, “The Hungarian Refugee Student Movement of 1956-57 and Canada,” in *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes Ethniques au Canada* 30, no. 1 (1998): 20.

¹⁹⁴ Pickersgill quoted in Laura Madokoro, “The Refugee Ritual: Sopron Students in Canada,” in *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada* 19, no. 1 (2008): 257.

¹⁹⁵ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 245.

¹⁹⁶ Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 204.

Pickersgill's efforts to aid the student refugees did not stop at bringing them overseas. Although most of the students did not speak any English or French, Pickersgill felt that it should be made possible for them to resume their studies at Canadian universities as soon as possible. Because Canada was not the only country to have recognized the potential of these student refugees, and the promise of financial aid in other countries could lure elsewhere students who were initially set on Canada or still undecided on where they would go, Pickersgill had to act fast in securing positions for the students.¹⁹⁷ He contacted the deans of various universities across Canada, asking them for aid and explaining to them the opportunities which the acceptance of Hungarian students would offer. Responses from the universities differed considerably in their excitement for this venture. The University of Western Ontario was prepared to take in no more than 25 students, and could only provide scholarships for five of them. Similarly, the University of Alberta responded that there was room for 25 students, but only if the government was prepared to pay 3 dollars per student per day for their housing and educational costs.¹⁹⁸

The most generous offer came from McGill University in Montreal. Together with senator Hartland Molson, the principal of McGill worked out a plan to provide housing and language lessons for the Hungarian refugee students in Montreal over the summer of 1957, so that the students may begin their studies that following fall. The government would pay food costs for the 140 students involved in the scheme, while the university provided housing in dorms and French or English lessons.¹⁹⁹ When he announced the scheme, Pickersgill expressed hope that other universities would follow McGill's example in offering aid to the student group, as there were an additional 200 students expected for whom arrangements had not yet been made.²⁰⁰ Unfortunately, much of this support did not materialize; many universities did not offer the kind of aid Pickersgill was hoping for to Canadian students, and felt it would be unfair to

¹⁹⁷ Hidas, "The Hungarian Student Refugee Movement of 1956-7 and Canada," 20.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 38-9.

¹⁹⁹ Statement by Hon. J.W. Pickersgill on Hungarian Student Refugees, 25 February 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 56, file 56 I-2-5545 C, "Hungarian Refugees. Student Groups", Library and Archives Canada.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

provide newcomers with the kind of support that domestic students had no chance of attaining.²⁰¹ This was highly disappointing to the Hungarian students, many of whom had believed that they would be receiving full scholarships and be supported throughout their studies, based on promises made to them in Austria by Pickersgill's immigration deputies.²⁰² Pickersgill did manage to set up a language learning program with the support of the president of the University of Toronto, Dr. Sidney Smith, which incorporated recent insights from the Linguistic Society in teaching Hungarian students the English language,²⁰³ and a large number of students managed to enrol in Canadian universities after a period of language acquisition and (menial) work, paying their own tuition fees.²⁰⁴

A special case was that of the Sopron University's forestry faculty. The Sopron University, which was located in the eponymous Hungarian town close to the Austrian border, was a school with a long and proud patriotic history, and a large number of its students participated in the revolutionary uprising, subsequently fleeing once the revolution was suppressed.²⁰⁵ Although students from many parts of the country did the same, in the Sopron case almost a full faculty fled: some 300 students and staff members of the forestry faculty, as a unit, escaped to Austria.²⁰⁶ ²⁰⁷ News about the faculty's flight from Hungary reached Pickersgill on the day of his arrival to Vienna, where the possibility of this group emigrating to Canada "excited [his] imagination".²⁰⁸ He immediately contacted James Sinclair, the minister of Fisheries, who began 'shopping around' the faculty to the various Canadian universities with

²⁰¹ Hidas, "The Hungarian Student Refugee Movement of 1956-7 and Canada," 39-40.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ J.W. Pickersgill, letter to Dr. Sidney Smith, 4 April 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 56, file 56 I-2-5545 C, "Hungarian Students - Ford Foundation, Toronto University, McMaster and The University of New Brunswick", Library and Archives Canada.

²⁰⁴ Hidas, "The Hungarian Student Refugee Movement of 1956-7 and Canada," 41.

²⁰⁵ Madokoro, "The Refugee Ritual," 256.

²⁰⁶ Marta Mihaly, "Remembering 1956: Invited Immigrants- The Sopron Saga," in *Hungarian Studies Review* 34, no. 1-2 (2007): 56.

²⁰⁷ Hidas, "The Hungarian Student Refugee Movement of 1956-7 and Canada," 21.

²⁰⁸ Pickersgill, *My Years with Louis St Laurent*, 243.

forestry programs. Various universities showed interest, with the Universities of Manitoba, British Columbia and Toronto making the most credible offers.²⁰⁹ The chancellor of UBC, whose forestry faculty was based in Vancouver, put together a bid for the faculty, in cooperation with the Powell River Logging Company, to move the group first to a camp set up by the company to spend the summer in Powell River, then to Vancouver to begin the 1957 fall term as a self-contained faculty²¹⁰. The students would be granted, upon completion of their studies, a B.Sc. in Forestry issued by the Sopron faculty of UBC, a unique diploma which would be recognized both in Canada and Hungary.²¹¹ It was UBC Chancellor Norman Mackenzie's assurance that the students would be able to continue their studies in Hungarian and remain a group, together with the faculty, that won them the bid.²¹²

The appeal of the Sopron group to universities was both that it represented a self-contained unit, with faculty and students ready to resume teaching, as well as an opportunity for massive positive press coverage. The media, whose "glorification of the refugee movement seemed to know no bounds",²¹³ covered the Soproners' journey from start to finish, eagerly adopting Pickersgill's term of the 'freedom train' to designate the movement of this faculty to British Vancouver.²¹⁴ This media coverage was attractive not just to UBC, but to the Canadian government as well. Pickersgill and his department's support for the Sopron faculty was justified as a way of importing foresters whose expertise was highly relevant to the wooded and rugged Canadian environment, but it functioned also as a highly effective propaganda tool. The Canadian government and educational system, together offering to take in a group of anti-Soviet freedom fighters and offering them a space to continue their education was, as the dean of the UBC forestry faculty told Pickersgill in a letter, "a vital part of the 'cold war' that highlights for

²⁰⁹ Madokoro, "The Refugee Ritual," 257.

²¹⁰ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 205.

²¹¹ Mihaly, "Remembering 1956," 144.

²¹² Hidas, "The Hungarian Student Refugee Movement of 1956-7 and Canada," 25.

²¹³ Madokoro, "The Refugee Ritual," 260.

²¹⁴ Mihaly, "Remembering 1956," 145.

the whole world to see the extreme difference between communism and a democracy such as ours in which the individual is respected because he is a human being.”²¹⁵

For many of the Sopron students, assimilation into Canadian society was quite difficult. Not only did they move across an ocean to a country with quite a small established Hungarian population, they were contained within the faculty, first physically at the Powell Lake camp and later in separate dormitories in Vancouver, and did not learn much English at first.²¹⁶ Even the academic environment was different, as the Hungarian forestry tradition focused on stewardship of the forest environment, whereas the Canadian forest industry aimed for profit maximization. Sopron forestry graduate Marta Mihaly explained that the Canadian foresters “were not even willing to discuss what they were doing without painfully trying to point out our ‘naivete’”.²¹⁷ This sense of alienation from the rest of the Canadian population would fade, but the Soproners’ status as ‘cold war refugees’, reinforced by the Canadian government, and Pickersgill’s, narrative of the ‘freedom train’ served in some ways to isolate them from the normal student population.²¹⁸

Many of the non-Soproner refugees, too, had difficulties adjusting to Canadian life and society after the first flush of excitement and sympathy for the ‘freedom fighters’ passed. Moving from a communist country where education and health care were free and jobs were provided by the state, to a capitalist country where there was much less of a social safety net and little job security was a shock to most Hungarians, especially young refugees who had never experienced life before socialism.²¹⁹ The general shock of emigration was compounded by “the suddenness of the change in their lives, as well as the fact that they came not only to a different country but to a society with a very different socio-political order”,²²⁰ and the period which followed after the

²¹⁵ Dean George Allen quoted in Madokoro, “The Refugee Ritual,” 258.

²¹⁶ Madokoro, “The Refugee Ritual,” 261.

²¹⁷ Mihaly, “Remembering 1956,” 148.

²¹⁸ Madokoro, “The Refugee Ritual,” 277.

²¹⁹ Dreisziger, “The Biggest Welcome Ever,” 56.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 207.

sympathy of the Canadian public waned proved ‘shattering’ to many.²²¹ Eventually, some 400 Hungarians returned to Europe, their journey paid for by Ottawa.²²² The remainder of the refugees who came to Canada, numbering almost 38,000 by the end of the program, settled in to the Canadian way of life, aided by Hungarian ethnic associations, language programs set up by federal and provincial authorities, religious societies’ charity and the various educational institutions which offered places. By 1964, “[t]he majority of [Hungarian refugees] ha[d] found employment and [were] more or less satisfactorily becoming integrated into the Canadian community.”²²³ In the decades that followed, the Hungarian community in Canada experienced a flowering of cultural institutions. The refugees’ youth, determination, knowledge of Hungarian cultural traditions and sheer numbers “revitalized immigrant cultural life for an ethnic group that was by the middle of the century on the verge of assimilation and spiritual extinction”,²²⁴ ushering in a ‘golden age’ of Hungarian ethnic life. Hungarian Jews, who made up 15 to 20 percent of the refugee stream,²²⁵ integrated particularly well into Canadian society. Peter Hidas argues that this was due partly to the fact that after the horrors of the Holocaust, many Hungarian Jews had shed their overt religious expressions and rituals, making it easier for them to then adapt to a new culture in Canada.²²⁶ However, Hidas notes that this meant that “[i]ndividual success frequently came at the cost of integration and complete assimilation”²²⁷ for the Hungarian-Canadian Jews.

²²¹ T. Cnossen, “Integration of Refugees: Some Observations On The Hungarians In Canada,” in *International Migration* 2, no. 2 (1964): 146..

²²² Peter Hidas, “Arrival and Reception: Hungarian Refugees, 1956-7,” in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: Canadian and Hungarian Perspectives*, eds. Christopher Adam et al. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010) 248.

²²³ Cnossen, “Integration of Refugees,” 135.

²²⁴ Dreisziger, “The 1956–1957 Refugee Movement in the Context of Hungarian Immigration to Canada since the Late 19th Century,” 213.

²²⁵ Peter Hidas, “Canada and the Hungarian Jewish Refugees, 1956-7,” in *East European Jewish Affairs* 37, no. 1 (2007) 75-6.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 84.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 85.

In the end, J.W. Pickersgill and his department's humanitarian response to the Hungarian refugee crisis is remembered as a watershed moment in the history of Canadian immigration and refugee policy.^{228 229 230} The decision taken by Pickersgill to admit any and all Hungarian refugees who wished to come to Canada to its shores, facilitated by the "almost carte blanche discretionary powers given to him"²³¹ by the Liberal government, helped create the post-World War II image of Canada as an inclusive and welcoming country, as well as a leading middle power in the international community. Out of a humanitarian sense of obligation to help those 'freedom fighters' who had suffered under and rebelled against the yolk of communist oppression, but certainly also because of a desire to secure high-quality, educated immigrants for Canada and to deal a blow to the Soviet Union in the ongoing Cold War, as well as to further cement Canada's place within the international community, Pickersgill and his government gave rise to a movement which "had no parallel in Canadian history ... no movement since 1957 has been as large nor ... as well received by the Canadian public."²³²

That Pickersgill is still seen by many Hungarian Canadians as the individual responsible for their reception in Canada is indicative of the level of personal control which he exerted over his department's actions during the crisis and shows that he made every effort to keep the initiative for the refugee reception in the hands of the federal government and away from the provinces. Pickersgill personally travelled to Vienna, secured individual arrangements with the various provinces regarding reception and care for the arriving refugees, pledged his support in particular for the students amongst the refugees and worked to place them in universities and schools across the country, and recruited corporations, religious organizations and humanitarian groups to help organize aid for the Hungarians. Although Pickersgill's initial reaction was delayed, once a comprehensive policy was decided upon and agreed to by Parliament on the 27th of November 1956, Pickersgill acted swiftly and decisively in simplifying procedures and

²²⁸ Dreisziger, "The Biggest Welcome Ever," 57.

²²⁹ Donaghy, "An Unselfish Interest?," 256.

²³⁰ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 212.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 211.

²³² *Ibid*, 212.

securing transportation, thereby facilitating a large-scale movement of 37,000 refugees over the next year.

Pickersgill was extremely pleased with those Hungarians that came over, calling them “an Immigration minister’s dream come true”.²³³ The Hungarian refugees were young, well-educated (partly due to Pickersgill’s efforts to recruit students) and, although they were not from Western Europe, being mostly white and mostly Christian they largely fit the criteria for preferred Canadian immigration originally set out by Mackenzie King which Pickersgill adhered to, which was that they would not “make a fundamental change in the character of the population”.²³⁴ However, Pickersgill and his department largely respected the Hungarians’ right to maintain their own cultural, linguistic and religious identity. Although English and French language classes were offered, there was no language learning requirement for the refugees, and in the case of the Sopron forestry faculty students were even able to resume their education in Hungarian. The refugees were offered religious guidance depending on their denomination, with Protestant, Catholic and Jewish organizations all recruited by the government to help in the reception effort.²³⁵ That the Hungarians were not expected to assimilate in a cultural sense is evident from the surge in Hungarian-Canadian ethnic life caused by the mass influx of the thousands of refugees, which revitalized a diminishing cultural community. The Hungarians were not expected to assimilate in order to be accepted into mainstream Canadian society, and Pickersgill explicitly worked to ensure that they were able to maintain their linguistic and cultural identities, congruous with his ideal of inclusive nationalism.

Ultimately, a large part of the reason that Pickersgill worked to bring over as many Hungarians as possible was that he believed they would be an asset to the Canadian nation. The Hungarians, he felt, were “extraordinarily bright looking”,²³⁶ a group of people whose youth, education and culture would contribute to the development of post-World War II Canada and

²³³ Pickersgill quoted in Papp-Zubrits, “The Forgotten Generation,” 29.

²³⁴ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 238.

²³⁵ Hidas, “Arrival and Reception,” 229.

²³⁶ Pickersgill quoted in Hidas, “The Hungarian Refugee Student Movement of 1956-57 and Canada,” 30.

“enrich the character of the country”.²³⁷ By and large they did: “the 56-ers [Hungarian refugees of the 1956 revolution] helped to make Canada what it became in the second half of the 20th century: a truly pluralistic, multicultural society where not only the native-born but also immigrants could fulfil their dreams.”²³⁸ The geopolitical situation which fostered an extraordinary level of goodwill in the Canadian public towards the freedom fighters of Hungary as well as a domestic political climate receptive to humanitarian aid to those perceived as anti-Communists made it possible for Pickersgill to act decisively and admit thousands of refugees and go on to find places for them across the country, especially for those refugees who wanted to continue their studies. His efforts to admit to and settle within Canada a large group of Hungarians, who then were encouraged to integrate into the Canadian public sphere through education and employment, without being urged to assimilate culturally except for the acceptance of the capitalist Canadian labor and health care systems, fit within the aim of inclusive nationalism. With his actions, Pickersgill sought to strengthen and enrich the Canadian nation, thereby fostering a pluralistic national identity which allowed for the Hungarians to retain their religious, cultural and linguistic expressions.

²³⁷ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 250.

²³⁸ Dreisziger, “The Biggest Welcome Ever,” 57.

Chapter Four - Case study: The Hobbema Samson Cree Crisis of 1951-1957

After the second World War, the Canadian public's interest in the so-called 'Indian Problem' rose dramatically, influenced by the recognition of the distinguished service of Indigenous Canadian soldiers during the war.²³⁹ The public's outrage at the poor living conditions, as well as the inferior legislative position of many First Nations people forced the Canadian Government to reconsider its Indigenous policy. According to the Canadian government's Indian Affairs Branch, this legislation review was aimed at "arriv[ing] at a new statute acceptable to both Indians and Government",²⁴⁰ and resulted in the creation of the *Indian Act of 1951*. Aside from signalling a shift in policy towards what Leslie terms 'administrative activism', where assimilation was to be affected through increased government intervention in Indigenous lives and communities,²⁴¹ the biggest impact of the Indian Act of 1951 came from its provisions on band membership. The 1951 legislation introduced the so-called Indian Register, a nationwide registration of those who had Indian status, i.e. were a member of a First Nations band. For the first time, a clear definition of who was considered 'Indian' was provided by federal law.²⁴² The Act determined that a person's Indian status could be terminated through several factors, such as voluntary enfranchisement, enrolment in higher education, and, for women, marriage to a non-Indian man. Until the introduction of Bill C-31, or a Bill to Amend the Indian Act, in 1985, these provisions stood unchanged, resulting in the loss of Indian status and associated treaty rights for over 100,000 Indigenous persons.

²³⁹ Ron Maguire and John Leslie, Editors, *The Historical Development of the Indian Act*, Treaties and Historical Research Centre, P.R.E. Group, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, August 1978, 113. http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/aanc-inac/R32-313-1978-eng.pdf

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ John Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration or Termination? The Development of Canadian Indian Policy, 1943-1963*, (PhD diss., Carleton University, 1999), 244.

²⁴² Ibid, 291.

The implications of the Indian Act of 1951 have been discussed heavily, both by historians²⁴³ and Canadian governmental commissions, through its Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports. However, one of the largest crises it brought forward, that surrounding the Indian status of 118 members of the Samson Cree band of Hobbema, Alberta (now officially reverted to the Cree name of Maskwacis), has received little academic attention, despite widespread media attention and public consternation at the time of the dispute; the crisis is briefly discussed in two doctoral theses,²⁴⁴ but no in-depth analysis can be found. Arising in 1952, the crisis came to a head in the winter of 1956, when a Registrar appointed by the Indian Affairs Branch, under J.W. Pickersgill's leadership, determined that 118 Samson Cree were to be evicted from the Hobbema reserve as they were not considered to have Indian status under the 1951 Indian Act. This decision, which followed years of protracted investigations into and debate of the disputed members' ancestry, caused an uproar in Alberta, where newspaper articles decried the government's heartlessness and charitable organizations petitioned Ottawa to reconsider. Despite these appeals, Pickersgill refused to act in the dispute, declaring that he could not, as minister, interfere with the decision made under the Indian Act, and that the expelled members should appeal to the Courts instead.

In this chapter, I will review this little-discussed episode in the history of Canadian-Indigenous relations, focusing in particular on the Indian Affairs branch's response to the dispute, Pickersgill's leadership and (in)action in the crisis and the role of notions of integration, assimilation, citizenship and Canadian identity in Pickersgill's response within the framework of inclusive nationalism. Focusing on these aspects will reveal friction between Pickersgill's ideal of inclusive nationalism and his belief in the assimilationist thrust of governmental policy regarding Indigenous peoples.

²⁴³ See for example Leslie and Maguire, "The Historical Development of the Indian Act", Richard H. Bartlett, *The Indian Act of Canada*, (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Press, 1988), "Leslie, Assimilation, Integration or Termination?", John L. Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canada's Indian Policy." in *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada*, ed. J.R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

²⁴⁴ Leslie, "Assimilation, Integration or Termination?", 290-6, and Laurie Meijer Drees, *A History of The Indian Association of Alberta, 1939-1959* (PhD diss., University of Calgary, 1997), 254-64, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk3/ftp04/nq24550.pdf>

The Indian Act of 1951 was not a standalone piece of legislation, but rather an amended version of an Act whose legislative history can be traced back to the very first decade of Canada's existence as a separate nation, and the attitude which it represents stretches back even further back into the early Colonial age. The original Indian Act, introduced in 1876, was a paternalistic piece of legislation which deemed 'Indians' to be wards of the British Crown whose lands were to be held in trust by the Crown for their use. This in turn was based on the British North America Act, which assigned responsibility for "Indians and lands reserved for Indians" to the Canadian Dominion government. The Indian Act established a colonial framework of guardianship which instituted complete government control over all aspects of Indigenous life and increasingly brought this control under the supervision of the Indian Affairs Branch.²⁴⁵ The aim of the Act was, in the words of Canada's first Prime Minister sir John Macdonald's words, to "do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian peoples in all respects to the inhabitants of the Dominion".²⁴⁶ Although the Act was amended numerous times in the following decades, the primary purpose of forced assimilation to dominant European culture maintained central to all versions of the Act. This was evident in, for example, the imposition of the band system, which sought to organize First Nations into groups governed internally by elected band leaderships, all within a Eurocentric model of representative democracy which undermined the hereditary traditional governance structures.²⁴⁷ Amendments such as the 1884 Potlatch Ban made illegal the traditional gift-giving ceremony practiced by many western First Nations in an attempt to eradicate this non-capitalist economic system in order to promote the assimilation of western First Nations into capitalist Canadian society.²⁴⁸ Other aspects of the Indian Act, chief among them the incorporation of the *Gradual Civilization Act* of 1857, explicitly aimed to remove Indigenous individuals' Indian status in exchange for voting rights, the right to serve in the

²⁴⁵ John Milloy, *Indian Act Colonialism: A Century of Dishonour, 1869-1969*. Research Paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance (2008): 1.

²⁴⁶ Macdonald quoted in *ibid*, 2.

²⁴⁷ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, "Looking Forward, Looking Back," *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* 1, (1996): 237.

²⁴⁸ John Lutz, "After the Fur Trade: The Aboriginal Labouring Class of British Columbia, 1849-1890," *Canadian Historical Association* 3, no. 1 (1992): 91.

armed forces, the right to own individual property and the right to enter higher education.²⁴⁹ As the titles of the Act and that of its close relation the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act*, indicate, this legislation was precipitated on the notion that achieving an end result of assimilation and total eradication of the distinct cultural, linguistic and spiritual identity of First Nations people was possible through a process of ‘gradual civilization’. Thus, it is out of a history of legislation aimed at the destruction of Indigenous lifeworlds to affect assimilation and integration into Eurocentric Canadian society that the Indian Act of 1951 emerges.

In the years following World War II, lobbying by Indigenous associations as well as non-Indigenous groups such as Catholic charities, combined with public and media pressure to ameliorate living and working conditions on Indigenous reserves, led the government to decide that the Indian Act, whose last amendment stemmed from 1927, should be reviewed.²⁵⁰ The assumption that First Nations people were a ‘dying race’ and that, as one church official put it in 1937 “the better Indians will be assimilated, the old will die off”²⁵¹ had turned out to be faulty. In fact the Indigenous population was expanding more rapidly than the general Canadian population, further stressing an already overburdened and badly organized Indian administration and leading to appalling conditions on some reserves. During the war, the Indian administration had been so directionless that it appeared to have no policy at all, and the organization was in clear need of guidance.²⁵²

To address the situation and satisfy the public’s demand for action, which stemmed largely from increased attention to the ‘Indian problem’ following the strong contributions of Indigenous servicemen during the war,^{253 254} a joint committee was appointed to assess the organization of the Indian administration and the legislation which it carried out. This committee then took the step of consulting Indigenous groups through hearings and briefs, a departure from

²⁴⁹ Milloy, *Indian Act Colonialism*, 6.

²⁵⁰ Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, 90-2.

²⁵¹ quoted in *ibid*, 96.

²⁵² Tobias, “Protection, Civilization, Assimilation,” 138.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 138

²⁵⁴ Leslie and Maguire, *The Historical Development of the Indian Act*, 113.

the previous process of creating legislation which did not seek any input from Indigenous representatives at all. Native associations responded by formulating a list of demands, which included calls for recognition of treaty rights, access to social security services and financial assistance. Their fifth point, calling for the “promotion of Indian art, crafts, songs, history and ethnology since ‘...the Indian stamped his identity on the very soul and history of the country...’”,²⁵⁵ was a clear demand for the government to abandon its assimilationist policies and recognize the value of Indigenous identity.

Their demands were not met. Instead, the North American Indian Brotherhood and the various other Indigenous associations were firmly constrained to “the periphery of political power and policy-making as ‘policy takers’”,²⁵⁶ and the *Indian Act of 1951* did not deviate from its predecessor’s aims of assimilation and integration. The Indigenous associations which took part in the joint committee hearings were treated not as partners in the decision-making process, but as wards whose wishes were being surveyed; they were takers, not makers, of policy. In the renewed legislation, the system of reservations and Indian status, along with the annuities and services associated with band membership, was again cast as a temporary phase in the progression toward enfranchisement, citizenship, and assimilation into mainstream white Canadian society.²⁵⁷ The goal of the policy remained to ‘gradually civilize’ Indigenous people, thus eventually removing the need for special considerations, reserves, and ‘Indian status’ all together.

The main impact of the renewed Indian Act was that its expanded definition of the term ‘Indian’ deprived many Indigenous people of their Indian status. Previous acts had, somewhat paradoxically, defined the term ‘Indian’ as denoting any male of Indian blood, his children and his wife. This definition linked the ‘indianness’ of a man to his blood line, but that of a woman to either her father or her husband. The revised definition of the term ‘Indian’ given by the 1951 act removed the reference to ‘Indian blood’, instead defining the term as applying to any person who could trace descent through the male line to an ancestor who was a member of a band, as well as

²⁵⁵ North American Indian Brotherhood quoted in Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, 94.

²⁵⁶ Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, iv.

²⁵⁷ Tobias, “Protection, Civilization, Assimilation,” 140.

these person's wives and children, except for those who had "lost Indian status by process of law". As Taschereau Mamers notes, this definition in itself is evidence of the assimilationist drive of the act, as "the source of one's 'Indianness' no longer rests in the body, but in colonial documents",²⁵⁸ removing Indigenous individuals' abilities to define themselves by non-European standards.

The exclusion of those who had lost Indian status as a legitimate native ancestor upon which Indian Status of descendants could be determined meant that children of Indigenous women who married non-status Indians did not qualify as status Indians, and thus lost their treaty rights, annuities and right to live on a reserve. It also meant that descendants of those Métis (mixed-race Indigenous people) who had accepted so-called 'scrip', a one-time payment in exchange for the extinguishing of all treaty rights of an individual, lost their Indian status. This new definition of the term Indian was deemed necessary by the government in order to create clarity on who did and did not qualify for the benefits and rights associated with Indian status. However, the exclusion of those whose descendants had lost Indian status not only served to resolve administrative difficulties in the execution of the legislation, but also to restrict the official 'Indian' population and thus the associated government spending on services to Indigenous people.²⁵⁹

With the new definition of Indian in place, a national register was created in order to record those who qualified for Indian status under the amended act. Under the previous Indian Act, registration of those First Nations people recognized by the government to have Indian status was decentralized and differed per region. The individual Indian Agents, working out of regional Indian Affairs field offices, kept local band membership lists recording those individuals who qualified for Indian status and thus were subject to the Indian Act. To create a nationwide register, a system was decided upon where for a period of six months the band lists previously kept by the local Indian Agents would be posted in a public forum for the band members to review and, if they disagreed with the inclusion or exclusion of certain individuals, appeal to

²⁵⁸ Danielle Taschereau Mamers, *Settler Colonial Ways of Seeing: Documentary Governance of Indigenous Life in Canada and its Disruption* (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 2017), 56.

²⁵⁹ Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, 189.

amend the list before it was forwarded to Ottawa and entered into the new central Indian Register.²⁶⁰

In the case of the Samson Cree Nation, located at Maskwacis, Alberta (then still called Hobbema after a Dutch landscape painter, before it reverted back to its Cree name in 2014), a dispute arose over the posted band lists. In 1952, when the lists were first made public for review, a member of the Samson band alleged that another member's ancestors had accepted scrip at one point in the past. Métis scrip, an exchange of land ownership or money for the extinguishment of a Métis person's Aboriginal title to the land, was offered by the Canadian government in the late 19th and early 20th century to Métis as part of their policy promoting the settlement of the West. The reason for the allegation was apparently a quarrel over a stolen horse; the man whose Indian status was being questioned had helped arrest the accuser, seemingly leading the latter to retaliate by questioning the legitimacy of his band membership.²⁶¹ Other underlying reasons behind the dispute may have been an unwillingness to share with a larger group the profits of the oil from a well which had recently been discovered on the reserve, as one contemporary newspaper editorial suggested.²⁶² In any case, if the man's ancestors had indeed accepted Métis scrip under the new Indian Act, this meant that their descendants would not have Indian status. The Samson Cree man, and some 117 members of his extended family who were also descended from those who were alleged to have taken scrip, would lose their band membership under the new act, which specifically excluded those descendants of Indigenous people who had "lost Indian status by process of law". The accusation was brought to the Indian Registrar, a position newly created in order to clear up disputes regarding Indian status registration, who began an investigation into the claims. In early 1954, after extensive genealogical and archival research, the investigation was ended without providing a conclusive answer, and for the moment the disputed members were allowed to remain on the reserve.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Taschereau Mamers, *Settler Colonial Ways of Seeing*, 80.

²⁶¹ Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, 290.

²⁶² Calgary Albertan, 'Shame on Canada', newspaper clipping, 20 April 1954, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34, vol. 25 "Hobbema, Alberta." Library and Archives Canada.

²⁶³ Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, 292.

When J.W. Pickersgill assumed the post of minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and thus head of Indian Affairs, in July 1954, he inherited an administration struggling with the implementation of the new Indian act and dogged by controversies such as the Samson Cree dispute. Public opinion in the Samson case was decidedly against expulsion of the 118 Cree from the Hobbema reserve, especially in the province of Alberta where civil rights advocates, Catholic charitable organizations and members of the Conservative party had joined together in criticizing the federal government for its stance in the case. An article in the Edmonton Journal, later reprinted in the Catholic church-supported Indian Record, called the situation caused by the Indian Act “one of the most ruthless pieces of confiscation in Canadian history”.²⁶⁴ In the Calgary Albertan, the Samson Cree crisis was compared to both Nazi Germany’s persecution of Jews and the United States’ racist Jim Crow laws, stating that the “present day Indian is cast into outer darkness and degraded far worse than the American Negro, perhaps as bad as Hitler’s Jew.”²⁶⁵

When Pickersgill was first confronted with the Samson band dispute, his response was to refer the Cree persons whose membership was being questioned to the legal options for appeal as described in the Indian Act of 1951, a response which was in line with that of his predecessor Walter Harris.²⁶⁶ Pickersgill’s adherence to the official Indian affairs policy, even in the face of increasing public scrutiny and criticism, can be seen as a mark of his belief in the core aim of the policy, which was ‘civilization’, i.e. integration of First Nations people into Canadian society through (forced) assimilation. Pickersgill expressed these beliefs in a speech to an Edmonton chapter of a community service organization in 1955 entitled “The Future of the Canadian Indians”, where he defended the Indian Act and its implications. He began the speech by quoting Mackenzie King, explaining why Indian Affairs had, after having been shuffled around various institutions and branches, finally been housed in the Immigration and Citizenship department: “having Citizenship, Immigration and Indian Affairs in one department would indicate that the

²⁶⁴ Edmonton Journal. “The Government’s Responsibility.” 8 January 1957, reprinted in *Indian Record* 20, no 1 (1957): 2.

²⁶⁵ Calgary Albertan, “Shame on Canada”.

²⁶⁶ Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, 292-4.

purpose of the activities of that department was to make Canadian citizens of those who were born here of the original inhabitants of the territory, or those who migrated to this country.”²⁶⁷ In order to achieve this goal of moving First Nations people towards Canadian citizenship, Pickersgill advocated to “make our common Canadian citizenship so much more attractive to the Indians than their special status”²⁶⁸ that Indigenous people would voluntarily abandon Indian status, enfranchise and therefore become full Canadian citizens. Placing Canadian citizenship as a logical end stage to the ‘Indian problem’ and equating First Nations people to immigrants echoes settler ideology which places European notions of culture and citizenship above Indigenous modes of life. Pickersgill’s assumption that Canadian citizenship could be made ‘as attractive’ to First Nations people as Indian status signifies that he did not recognize that the removal of Indigenous culture, language, religion and worldview inherent to such assimilationist policies would prevent any large number of First Nations people from voluntarily enfranchising.

The Indian Act of 1951 signalled a recasting of Indian policy towards ‘administrative activism’. This was the notion that improving living conditions for First Nations people, as well as hastening their integration into mainstream Canadian society, should be achieved through increased (federal) government involvement in management of Indian affairs, in the form of education grants, special vocational programs, home construction projects and so on. Pickersgill subscribed wholly to this notion, explaining that he believed education especially to be the gateway to integration: “[i]f we want Indians to regard themselves, and be regarded as, an integral part of the Canadian population, there is no question in my mind about the importance of having this attitude developed in their early years in school.”²⁶⁹ He also emphasized that as industrialization furthered across Canada and the Indigenous population increased, traditional methods of hunting and trapping would not be enough to offer subsistence to the Indigenous population, and government and provincial efforts to find employment outside traditional spheres

²⁶⁷ J.W. Pickersgill, ‘The Future of the Canadian Indians,’ Speech to the Kiwanis Club, Edmonton, 21 November 1955, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 272, file 35, “Speeches”, file 35, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

were being established.²⁷⁰ It is not surprising from this viewpoint, then, that Pickersgill's initial reaction to the Samson Cree band dispute was to hold fast to the Indian Act.

In the two years after the initial ruling on the Samson Cree dispute by the Indian registrar, the case remained at an impasse. Although the 118 Cree were not under immediate threat of expulsion, their Indian status remained unconfirmed and their band membership was still in dispute. During this time, the plight of the Samson Cree band members attracted the attention of Ruth Gorman, a female civil liberties lawyer from Alberta who felt strongly that the Indian Act and its provisions on band membership were discriminatory. Acting as the band's legal counsel and in consultation with the activist First Nations Indian Association of Alberta, Gorman began corresponding with federal and provincial officials, arguing that the Samson Cree dispute should be decided in favour of the members whose status was in doubt, and furthermore that the Indian Act should be overturned.²⁷¹ ²⁷² Gorman and the IAA sent numerous letters to the federal government in Ottawa, both to the department of Citizenship and Immigration and later to the prime minister directly, pressuring them to act.

Initially, Indian Affairs officials responded derisively to Gorman's letters. In a memorandum to Pickersgill's predecessor Harris, Indian Affairs director Col. H.M. Jones described Gorman's arguments as "difficult to understand"²⁷³ and deemed the editorial article which Gorman sent along with her letter to be "replete with the type of half-truth that always sounds quite plausible to persons having no knowledge of the facts".²⁷⁴ However, the department of Indian Affairs' initial dismissal of her arguments did not deter Gorman, who, when appointed to the executive of the Civil Liberties Section of the Canadian Bar association in 1955, formed a committee on the legal status and rights of the Canadian Indian. The committee's report, released in 1956, concluded that "[t]he original treaty promises made to the Indians of Canada are being

²⁷⁰ J.W. Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 249.

²⁷¹ Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, 293.

²⁷² Meijer Drees, *A History of the Indian Association of Alberta*, 260.

²⁷³ H.M. Jones, memorandum to the Deputy Minister, 10 June 1954, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 "Hobbema, Alt.", file 12-H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

broken, and this is an injustice which should be rectified.”²⁷⁵ The committee took issue with the Act’s section 12, which involuntarily removed Indian status in the case of illegitimacy, marriage to a non-Indian man and ancestors’ having taken scrip, as well as the fact that under the 1951 Act, an Indigenous person could not vote unless they were enfranchised or non-status, and argued that the Act’s delegation of discretionary power to the minister of Citizenship and Immigration without the option of a court appeal for review violated the civil liberties of band members.²⁷⁶ These arguments were reported in the press under sympathetic headlines such as “Indians Said Victims of Broken Promises”,²⁷⁷ causing yet another stream of letters to Ottawa from concerned private citizens and charitable organizations demanding action.

By 1956, the Indian registrar had received additional evidence supporting the claim that scrip had been taken by the disputed members’ ancestors, and had ordered the families evicted from the reserve.²⁷⁸ Now, calls for action were coming not just from the Conservative and Catholic groups whose opposition to the Liberal government at large helped fuel their dismay with the federal Indian policy, but also from fellow Liberal Party members. A defeated local Liberal candidate from Ponoka, Alberta wrote to Prime Minister St Laurent explaining that he knew the disputed band members to be fine people, and called their removal from the reserve “an injustice” which had “the whole country up in arms.”²⁷⁹ He declared that he had full faith that St Laurent and his government would clear up the situation and remove the injustice without delay. The letter was relayed to the minister of Citizenship and Immigration’s office, whose response that “[i]t is considered that the provisions in the Indian Act covering membership protests are fair

²⁷⁵ Report of the Committee on the Legal Status and Civil Rights of the Canadian Indian, Civil Liberties Section of the Canadian Bar Association, 30 August 1956, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 12-H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ The Globe and Mail, “Indians Said to be Victims of Broken Promises”, newspaper clipping, 6 September 1956, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 12-H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁷⁸ Meijer Drees, *A History of the Indian Association of Alberta*, 259.

²⁷⁹ R. McLaren, letter to Louis St Laurent, 20 December 1956, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 12-H, Library and Archives Canada.

and sound”²⁸⁰ shows that Pickersgill and his office were still standing by the policy, despite intense criticism from both out- and inside the party.

Although public opinion had been overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Samson Cree plight since the beginning of the dispute to the point where it had become something of a cause célèbre,²⁸¹ the government’s response to the Hungarian refugee crisis in the late fall of 1956 was a decisive moment in the dispute. Ottawa’s contrasting treatment of the Hungarians and the Samson Cree generated an immense wave of public indignation at the government’s perceived hypocrisy. Shortly after Pickersgill’s announcement that Canada would take in any Hungarian refugee who wished to come over, a telegram by the head of the Alberta chapter of the Catholic Women’s League of Canada berated Pickersgill for his treatment of the Samson Cree in light of his recent announcements: “while Canada generously succours Hungarian refugees[,] shall we make refugees of our naive people[?]”²⁸² Similar sentiments were shared in numerous letters to Pickersgill’s office, some directly challenging Pickersgill for his stance in the dispute: “that the same minister who is arranging for the entry into Canada of Hungarian refugees of Communist cruelty should simultaneously allow his department to inflict similar cruelties on his own ward bewilders one”²⁸³ wrote a woman from Hamilton, Ontario. Newspaper articles called for Pickersgill to either act or resign, with an editorial in the *Albertan* noting that “the longer [Pickersgill] tarries the more he disgraces his office, his government and his party.”²⁸⁴

Indeed, pressure from within Pickersgill’s own party was building even higher, with the federal Liberal co-ordinator for Alberta sending Pickersgill an advertisement placed in a newspaper by an electrical company which condemned both the local *Albertan* as well as the federal government for condoning the expulsion of the Samson Cree while encouraging the

²⁸⁰ M.C. Hoey, letter to R. McLaren, 9 January 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 12-H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸¹ Leslie, *Assimilation, Integration, or Termination?*, 293.

²⁸² Marion Conroy, telegram to J.W. Pickersgill, 29 December 1956, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 12-H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸³ Mary Forster Martin, letter to J.W. Pickersgill, 9 January 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 112/3-3-0, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸⁴ The *Albertan*, ‘Confess, Mr. Pickersgill, or Resign,’ newspaper clipping, 24 January 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 275, “Indian Affairs, 1954-1957.”, Library and Archives Canada.

Hungarian refugee movement.²⁸⁵ Such an advertisement by a non-political actor, the co-ordinator had verified with “old-time Liberals”, had never before appeared, and according to him it was an indication that political opinion in all of Alberta, including with the local Liberal party, was against the government’s stance in the dispute.²⁸⁶ The detrimental effect which the Samson affair was having on the Liberal party’s reputation was especially worrying in light of the upcoming federal elections, further increasing pressure on Pickersgill to act to relieve the situation.

When faced with this intense public pressure, Pickersgill altered his defensive stance somewhat. Instead of outright defending the threatened expulsion of the 118 Samson Cree based on the Indian Act, he referred to the band members’ option of appealing the Indian Registrar’s judgement in Court, adding that it would be improper for the minister in charge of Indian Affairs to take side in what was essentially a ‘dispute between Indians’.²⁸⁷ When challenged in parliament by then-Conservative MP John Diefenbaker, who argued that Pickersgill could use his discretionary powers as minister to have the expulsion halted, Pickersgill responded that “the minister has no power; the power resides in the governor in council.”²⁸⁸ That the Samson Cree had not yet taken the option of appealing to the courts was in fact a deliberate strategy by the IAA and Gorman, who decided that delaying any court action for as long as possible would provide them with the greatest opportunity to put pressure on Pickersgill in the hope that this would force him to revise Indian Affairs policy.²⁸⁹

To further compound this strategy of agitation, Gorman composed a petition on behalf of, and signed by, the IAA, addressed to Queen Elizabeth asking her “[a]s loyal and devoted

²⁸⁵ Advertisement by Bates Electric, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 12-H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸⁶ John L. Haar, letter to J.W. Pickersgill, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 12-H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸⁷ J.W. Pickersgill, letter to Mary Forster Martin, 25 January 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Hobbema, Alt.”, file 112/3-3-0, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸⁸ J.W. Pickersgill in answer to J. Diefenbaker, debate on Citizenship and Immigration, Indian Affairs-Situation on Hobbema Reserve, Alberta, in *Edited Hansard, Canada* (Parliament: House of Commons), 22nd Parliament, 5th session, vol. 1, 1957, 434. http://parl.canadiana.ca/view/oop.debates_HOC2205_01/436?r=0&s=1

²⁸⁹ Meijer Drees, *A History of the Indian Association of Alberta*, 261.

subjects, who have no voice of our own ... to intercede on behalf of us.”²⁹⁰ The petition did not mention the Samson Cree dispute explicitly, but a paragraph containing a sentimental appeal to “our great white mother over the seas”²⁹¹ to intervene in the new Act’s band membership procedures was clearly designed to address the crisis. The more general nature of the petition was intended to prevent it from being routed to Indian Affairs for Pickersgill to deal with,²⁹² but this strategy failed and Pickersgill answered the IAA petition on behalf of the Queen. In a five-page response to the petition, Pickersgill defended the Indian Act and argued that beside the Samson Cree case, there were no active disputes related to the petition and therefore there was no action which he could take.²⁹³ While the purpose of the petition had been to further publicize the plight of the Samson Cree and to increase pressure on Pickersgill to intervene, its interception by the Department of Indian Affairs meant that no answer from London was ever received, and a judicial appeal was the only avenue remaining for the Samson Cree. Gorman and the IAA, who had been raising money from various Bands and sympathetic charitable organizations to establish a legal defence fund,²⁹⁴ decided that judicial action could no longer be delayed and officially appealed the decision in February of 1957.

Ultimately, the Samson Cree dispute was resolved in court. On March 1, 1957, Chief Justice Nelles Buchanan determined that the original protests against the 118 Samson Cree were incorrectly made, thereby invalidating the protests regardless of whether the disputed members’ ancestors had ever accepted scrip, and reversing the expulsion order.²⁹⁵ Two days later, Pickersgill made a statement in Parliament expressing his delight at Justice Buchanan’s verdict,

²⁹⁰ Petition to Queen Elizabeth by the Indian Association of Alberta, 25 January 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Band Membership. Hobbema, Alt.”, file IA 12 H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Meijer Drees, *A History of the Indian Association of Alberta*, 260.

²⁹³ J.W. Pickersgill, response to Ruth Gorman regarding Petition to Queen Elizabeth by the Indian Association of Alberta, 12 February 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Band Membership. Hobbema, Alt.”, file IA 12 H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁹⁴ Indian Association of Alberta, Minutes of Executive Meeting, 19 January 1967, Indian Association of Alberta Fonds, Series 2, file M-7155-6, “Minutes. - 1956-1957.”, 555, Glenbow Library and Archives, Calgary, <https://www.glenbow.org/collections/search/findingAids/archhtml/extras/iaa/m-7155-6-pt2.pdf>.

²⁹⁵ Meijer Drees, *A History of the Indian Association of Alberta*, 262.

stating that he had “felt that these people, who have always been regarded as Indians, should continue to be regarded as Indians.”²⁹⁶ At the same time, he defended his actions in the matter, stating that he “felt that it was [his] duty to carry out the law made by Parliament”.²⁹⁷ Pickersgill later characterized the affair in his autobiography by expressing that he had felt frustrated by his inability to interfere in the dispute, and hurt by his portrayal as “arbitrary, arrogant and inhumane”²⁹⁸ by the media and opposition party. He also recognized that the affair had significantly hurt the Liberal party’s reputation, especially in Alberta where the case had been front-page news on several occasions, and had contributed to the Liberal government’s defeat in the 1957 elections, which spelled the end of Pickersgill’s tenure as minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

On the whole, Pickersgill’s response to the Samson Cree band membership dispute was defensive in character. He clung to and hid behind legislation, citing the joint committee hearings which led to the creation of the Indian Act of 1951 as proof that the Indian Administration policy was fair and just. Pickersgill’s rigid insistence that he had no power to intervene or undo the Indian Registrar’s decision was in stark contrast to his decisive conduct in the Hungarian refugee crisis, which was occurring at the same time. This contrast did not escape the attention of the public, and Pickersgill was pressured in newspaper articles, letters by charitable organizations, action groups and concerned citizens, and by his political rivals in the provincial and federal legislature to show the Samson Cree the same compassion which the public felt he and his department had shown the Hungarian refugees.

Despite his self-professed delight at the eventual outcome of the Samson crisis that none of the members would be expelled, Pickersgill’s actions during the dispute show a lack of respect for and understanding of Indigenous people’s right to self-determination and their right not to acquiesce to assimilation. Although Pickersgill’s very position as head of Indian Affairs was derived from his position as minister of Citizenship and Immigration and was the result of a

²⁹⁶ J.W. Pickersgill, statement in Parliament on Judge Buchanan’s decision, 3 March 1957, J.W. Pickersgill Fonds, MG 32 B 34 vol. 25 “Band Membership. Hobbema, Alt.”, file IA 12 H, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 249.

clumping together of immigrants and Indigenous Canadians into one group, namely that of non-citizens, Pickersgill did not show First Nations people the same inclusivity and rights to not be assimilated which he afforded new immigrants to Canada. Pickersgill's belief in 'integration', i.e. assimilation, of Indigenous Canadians into mainstream Canadian society, culminating ultimately in enfranchisement, the assumption of Canadian citizenship and the voluntary abandonment of 'Indian status', drove him to adhere to a strict interpretation of the Indian Act of 1951 even in the face of intense public outrage and despite negative political consequences. The Indian Affairs department's 'administrative activism' approach to the assimilation of Indigenous Canadians attested to a belief that in order for 'status Indians' to become Canadian citizens, they had to become productive members of mainstream Canadian society. Pickersgill's enthusiastic adoption of this administrative activism and his support for the rigid Indian Act which deprived thousands of their 'Indian status' indicate that there was no place for authentic expressions of Indigenous cultures, languages, lifeworlds or religions in Pickersgill's view of a Canadian national identity. His inclusiveness, which had stretched to accommodate the expressions of culture, language and religion of the Hungarian refugees so generously, did not encompass the right for Indigenous Canadians to retain their native identity. Pickersgill did not consider the right for the 118 Samson Cree to retain their band membership and their Indian status, as well as for the Samson band to determine its membership autonomously, to supersede the goal of 'integration'. The episode of the Samson Cree dispute shows that Pickersgill's concept of inclusive nationalism did not stretch to include Indigenous identities and Indigenous religious, cultural and linguistic expressions into the pluralistic Canadian national identity which he envisioned.

Finally, it is important to note in this discussion that for some Indigenous people, inclusion within a pluralistic Canadian identity may not be desirable at all. Even an inclusive Canadian nationalism which provides space for the authentic expression of Indigenous languages, cultures and religious practices still necessarily involves identification with the Canadian nation, a settler colonial state which displaced First Nations communities and deprived them of their sovereignty. Instead, First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals may prefer to identify with Aboriginal, Métis or pan-Indian nationalism, or feel no connection to any overarching national identity apart from their specific First Nation community identity.

Conclusion

From the foundation of Canada as a domain at confederation in 1867, politicians and public thinkers have attempted to find an answer to the quest for a distinct Canadian national identity. In the first few decades after confederation, the debate raged mainly between those in favour of association of the Canadian identity with Britishness and those in favour of an anti-imperialist Canadian identity. This conflict came to a head during the first World War, when the issue of conscription deeply divided Canadian society. Over the course of the next decade, the imperialist position lost ground in Canada, and in 1931 the Statute of Westminster was ratified, ending British control over Canadian politics save for the power to amend the Canadian constitution. The loss of the imperial connection, coupled with fears of American cultural annexation and an increased influx of immigrants amplified the call for the establishment of a Canadian national identity which was free from either European or American association.

The ruling Canadian Liberal party's answer to this call was to advocate for a nationalism which transcended ethnic and linguistic barriers. This Liberal postwar nationalism, with its non-assimilationist thrust, is not congruous with the modern definition of the political ideology of nationalism, as it does not call for ethnic, linguistic and cultural unity, and does not advocate the exclusion of, or discrimination against, those who do not conform. It does not fit Anthony Smith's definitions of either territorial or ethnic nationalism, as there is no singular Canadian ethnic, as Smith himself has acknowledged. The paradigm of civic nationalism is a closer fit to describe the Liberal postwar Canadian nationalism, but its emphasis on shared democratic institutions and values as the factor which binds the nation together disregards Canadian nationalism's adoption of various cultural, linguistic and religious expressions as intrinsic parts of the Canadian national identity.

In order to categorize Liberal postwar Canadian nationalism, then, I made use of David Chennells' paradigm of inclusive versus exclusive nationalism. As Chennells defines only the latter in detail, I built upon his definition of exclusive nationalism to define inclusive nationalism as nationalist political activity of a kind that seeks to equitably foster a multitude of ways of life,

including religious, cultural or linguistic expressions, based on a shared commitment to a pluralistic national identity.

The rise of this inclusive nationalism had a substantial ideological impact within the Liberal Canadian governments of the 1940s and 50s, informing a multitude of aspects of domestic and foreign policy and leading to the creation of legislation aimed at arriving at a more unified Canadian society, as evidenced by events such as the creation of the Royal Commission on Biculturalism and Bilingualism. Furthermore, the ideal of inclusive nationalism formed the basis for the governmental policy of official multiculturalism, proposed by Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1971 and enacted a decade later. However, despite its extensive impact on the Canadian political landscape, this inclusive form of nationalism remains understudied. Scholarship on Canadian nationalism is often framed in relation to either the United States or to exclusive Québécois (French-Canadian) nationalism, and only rarely does it centre on the ideology of mainstream liberal Canadian nationalism itself.

In order to investigate in more detail how this inclusive nationalism came to shape Canadian federal politics and policies in the postwar period, I used the person of John Whitney Pickersgill, a person reflective to some extent of a larger political consensus in the Liberal governments which he served, as a lens through which to view the government's actions within a framework of inclusive nationalism. I asked the following question: what is J.W. Pickersgill's personal concept of Canadian nationalism and how does he attempt to shape governmental policy to achieve his nationalist ideal?

J.W. Pickersgill was a self-described ardent Canadian nationalist. The highly influential but little remembered civil servant and politician, who was part of a number of Liberal governments, believed that the character of the Canadian nation was pluralistic in nature, composed of a multitude of cultures, languages and religions, but bound by the attachment to the Canadian 'common national patrimony' in a 'community of feeling'. He posed that the unifying Canadian experience was the transformation of the wilderness, shared not just by the 'old' Canadians who physically overcame Canada's geographical challenges but also in a more metaphysical sense by those who were helping build the modern Canadian nation.

In his various positions within the federal government, Pickersgill was frequently able to shape government policy to fall in line with the inclusive nationalist values which he espoused. As a civil servant, Pickersgill used his position as a generalist within a ‘mandarinate’ of like-minded officials to help create an effective civil service which could function to serve the broad national interest. Pickersgill levied his power as advisor to the prime minister to advocate for measures which he believed would serve to further the cause of national unity, such as the plebiscite on conscription during the second World War, the confederation of Newfoundland and the promotion of official bilingualism. After his entry into politics as an elected official, Pickersgill continued to use his position of power for nation-building purposes in line with inclusive nationalism, proactively stimulating (European) immigration to Canada, promoting Canadian citizenship and associating it with values of inclusivity.

However, as the two cases studied in this work show, significant friction existed between Pickersgill’s desire to achieve a pluralistic, inclusive and unified Canada, and his loyalty to federal and Liberal party policies, as well as his adherence to settler colonialist beliefs. During the Hungarian refugee crisis, he acted decisively, arranging for transportation and reception of as many refugees as possible to Canada, leading him to be remembered by many Hungarian Canadians as the principal author of the humanitarian response. Conversely, during the Samson Cree band membership crisis, Pickersgill hid behind excuses of legislation and bureaucracy, justifying his inaction by pointing the aggrieved Samson Cree to the option of a court appeal. While Pickersgill arranged for the reception of the Hungarian refugees into Canada to allow for the refugees to retain as much of their linguistic, cultural and religious customs and identity as possible, his handling of the Samson Cree case showed his unwillingness to afford Indigenous Canadians the same rights, instead aiming for their assimilation into Eurocentric mainstream Canadian society.

Pickersgill was enabled to act within the bounds of inclusive nationalism during the Hungarian refugee crisis by the domestic and international political situation at the time, with a Canadian public receptive to the plight of victims of Communist repression, the booming economy experiencing a labour shortage which the relatively well-educated refugees could provide a solution to, and the federal government eager to confirm Canada’s international posture

as a leading middle power. Yet in the case of the Samson Cree crisis, the political implications of Pickersgill's reticent stance, both for his own reputation and that of his party, were overwhelmingly negative, as the many letters, newspaper articles and telegrams expressing consternation and anger at Pickersgill's treatment of the Samson Cree show. In the latter case, Pickersgill's adherence to the assimilationist thrust of Canadian governmental policy on Indigenous people, which was antithetical to the tenets of inclusive nationalism, superseded his belief in inclusivity, thereby depriving the Samson Cree of their right to authentic self-expression, language, culture and self-determination. That the hypocrisy displayed by Pickersgill in his differing treatment of the Hungarian refugees and the Samson Cree was largely condemned by the Canadian public shows that the ideal of inclusive nationalism was being embraced not just by those in positions of governmental authority such as Pickersgill but also was carried to some extent by the greater Canadian public. Pickersgill's inclusive beliefs, though apparently sincerely held, were applied inconsistently; white European Hungarian refugees were afforded the right to non-assimilation while nonwhite Indigenous Canadians were deprived of their right to authentic cultural, linguistic and religious expression.

Although J.W. Pickersgill was an individual actor within a system of government, his attempts to shape government policy in line with inclusive nationalism, as well as his failure to do so in situations where acting within the bounds of inclusive nationalism would conflict with his settler colonialist beliefs, provide insight into a relatively little-researched section of Canadian history. This work, rather than examining Liberal postwar Canadian nationalism in relation to its counterparts, brings together a number of aspects of Canadian history and politics which are not commonly linked, such as Canada's role in the international community in the Cold War context, Canada's treatment of First Nations, Indigenous and Métis people, and the role of the Canadian civil service and Liberal party in postwar nation-building, into a discussion regarding the political application of ideals of inclusive nationalism. The resulting analysis, based on both scholarly and archival sources, showcases the importance of critically assessing proclaimed ideals of inclusivity and openness and investigating to what extent and to which ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups the right to non-assimilation is afforded.

As this work shows, the impact of the Canadian Liberal inclusive nationalism of the postwar period on federal Canadian politics was extensive, and the uncovered tension between ideals of non-assimilation and the political reality calls for further investigation. Such further research could retain a focus on J.W. Pickersgill but include case studies from a wider time range than was studied in the present work. Another possible approach for further research could be to explore the actions of Pickersgill's nationalistic peers within the civil service and federal government within a framework of inclusive nationalism, or to take a detailed look at the application of inclusive nationalist ideals on a provincial or even municipal level.

Ultimately, illuminating the relatively little-studied Canadian nationalism of which J.W. Pickersgill was such an ardent proponent serves to increase our insight into the varied forms which nationalist beliefs can take, and the ways in which they are used to shape policy. In a time where nationalism, particularly exclusive, ethnicity-based nationalism, is on a global rise, achieving a greater understanding of nationalism in its many forms is of crucial importance.

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