

'YOU CAN'T HAVE IT ALL FRENCH, ALL AT ONCE':

FRENCH LANGUAGE RIGHTS,
BILINGUALISM,
AND POLITICAL COMMUNITY IN SASKATCHEWAN,
1870-1990

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Abstract

This study is about the place of French and French speakers in the Saskatchewan political community. Beginning with the political foundations of western Canada in 1870, it argues that exclusion of the French language and francophone culture became central to how Saskatchewan understood itself politically. Saskatchewan was to be part of a new British-Canadian nation which left behind the problems of language, religion, and culture plaguing central Canada. English would be the province's only official language.

Over the next century this understanding of the Saskatchewan political community was reinforced during key moments of provincial history. Whenever there was a crisis of state legitimacy or a threat to the cultural definition of the region -- the founding of Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan (1870 and 1905 respectively), the First World War and the interwar years (1914 to 1931), and the rise of the new West (1968 to 1990), the English-speaking character of Western Canada was reinforced by successive provincial governments and their citizens, while the French language and francophone culture were cast as alien to the region's cultural character. From the beginning, however, this vision of Saskatchewan was threatened by proponents of a bilingual and bicultural Canada. These political leaders and activists believed equality of francophones and anglophones to be part of western Canadian history and an important value for the Saskatchewan political community.

The battle over official bilingualism and language rights between 1968 and 1990 provides new insights into how Saskatchewan understood itself and its history. Although after 1968 it was no longer fashionable for Canada to define itself as principally British, bilingualism remained a problematic notion for the provincial political community. New provincial cultural policies after 1968 led to a pitched battle involving politics of memory. Saskatchewan francophones insisted that Saskatchewan declare itself bilingual because the Fransaskois had opened and helped found western Canada, while Saskatchewan governments insisted that multiculturalism was the real (hi)story of the West. Faced with increasing Fransaskois activism and the choice of making French an official language in the province during these years, both New Democratic Party and Progressive Conservative governments chose not to do so, arguing that such a move had no historical, political, or demographic justification. By 1990 the battle over bilingualism was largely over. The Fransaskois left their mark on the modern Saskatchewan political community by scoring key victories in certain areas, but also by surviving bitter defeats in others.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| ACEFC | Association des Commissaires d'Écoles Franco-Canadiennes de la Saskatchewan |
| ACFA | Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta |
| ACFC | Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan |
| CCF | Commission culturelle fransaskoise |
| CEF | Commission des écoles fransaskoises |
| FFHQ | Fédération des Francophones hors Québec |
| PAA | Provincial Archives of Alberta |
| PAS | Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan |
| SCC | Supreme Court of Canada |
| SFM | Société franco-manitobaine |
| SKCA | Saskatchewan Court of Appeal |
| SKQB | Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench |
| STF | Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation |

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INTRODUCTION

French in the Imagined West: Memory, Political Community, and Language

The experience of prairie citizens during the past hundred years constitutes a relevant and important claim to a common prairie linguistic heritage, one based on shared experience of linguistic assimilation into the English of Canada or North America.

- Gerald Friesen¹

...I would say that there is no question whether French language rights will become a 'problem' in Saskatchewan. The only question is whether it will be handled with foresight and generosity, or whether it will have to be 'solved' by the 'Feds'.

- Peter Kilburn to Allan Blakeney, 1977²

The decision was a defeat for the francophones of Saskatchewan and Alberta. On 20 November 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada handed down its decision in *Caron v. Alberta*, ruling that French did not enjoy constitutional status in the province.³ The case was a long one. In 2003 Franco-Albertan Gilles Caron refused to pay a traffic ticket printed in English, claiming that French was an official language in Alberta and western Canada. But Caron's arguments, the majority of six judges ruled twelve years later, "cannot be sustained in the face of the historical record and the underlying principles of constitutional interpretation."⁴ The three dissenting judges declared that "The historical context leads to the unavoidable conclusion that there was a historic compromise regarding legislative bilingualism."⁵ The ambivalent decision reflected the almost diametrically opposed historical interpretations of western Canada used by Caron and the Alberta government as the case wound its way up to the Supreme Court.

¹ Gerald Friesen, "The Prairies as Region: The Contemporary Meaning of an Old Idea," in *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History*, (Winnipeg, Manitoba University Press, 1996), 177-178.

² Peter Kilburn to Allan Blakeney, 19 July 1977. *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan [PAS]*, Allan Blakeney Fonds.

³ And, by extension, in Saskatchewan since both provinces share a single constitutional history inherited from the North-West Territories.

⁴ *R. v. Caron*, [2015] SCC 56, para. 103.

⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 11.

Caron is the latest example of the controversial status of French in western Canada.⁶ It demonstrates an uncomfortable truth about western Canadian politics: the status and place of French in the region is not a dead issue. It is a spectre that haunts politics, neither fully alive, nor completely dead. Although *Caron* started in Alberta, it is clear that the Saskatchewan government has also had its share of recent conflicts with francophones: since 2010, for example, the courts have been asked to render six different judgments related to francophone school funding.⁷

Francophones in western Canada have never accepted the dominance of English in public life as legitimate. They view themselves as one of western Canada's "founding peoples" whose language and culture deserve equality with that of the English-speaking majority. A memory of French presence in the West, dating all the way back to the fur trade era and the celebrated adventures of La Vérendrye and his sons, continues to nourish the western Canadian francophone political identity. Provincial governments, on the other hand, are quick to advance their own understandings of western history: a region created by the efforts of many, where the adoption of English as the region's main language was a necessary part of building a new society under difficult circumstances.⁸

"You Can't Have it All French, All At Once" is about these competing historical memories of western Canada between 1870 and 1990. Using Saskatchewan as a case study, this dissertation examines opposing visions of the past, present, and future of the French language in

⁶ Other notable examples include the *Forest* case (1979) in Manitoba and the *Mercure* case in Saskatchewan which is discussed in chapter five of this dissertation. For the *Forest* case and subsequent French-language crisis in Manitoba, see Raymond-M. Hébert, *Manitoba's French-Language Crisis: A Cautionary Tale* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004).

⁷ For example, *Conseil scolaire fransaskois v. Saskatchewan*, [2011] SKQB 210; *Conseil scolaire fransaskois v. Saskatchewan*, [2013] SKQB 211; *Conseil scolaire fransaskois v. Saskatchewan*, [2012] SKQB 217; *Conseil scolaire fransaskois v. Saskatchewan*, [2012] SKQB 393; *Saskatchewan v. Conseil scolaire fransaskois*, [2014] SKQB 285.

⁸ The province's motto, "From Many Peoples, Strength", adopted in 1986, evokes this interpretation of Saskatchewan history.

the Saskatchewan political community. It argues that at pivotal moments in Saskatchewan history, debates surrounding official bilingualism and the status of French played a key role in defining the provincial political community. As renowned western Canadian historian Gerald Friesen explains, "history has borne heavily upon westerners and *has* shaped community self-perception. Moreover, certain historical images are now a source of confusion because westerners utilize inherited concepts in circumstances where such notions no longer apply."⁹ In the case of Saskatchewan language disputes, the hand of history is indeed heavy.¹⁰ The province's early history, which favoured eliminating the French language from public institutions and the education system, later influenced how both francophones and English speakers viewed bilingualism.

For Friesen, popular and academic understandings of western Canada comprise three general categories: formal (geographic), functional (economic), and imagined. The present study focuses on the third category -- more precisely, on the imagined political community in western Canada. "A place must be imagined," Friesen argues, "before it can exist."¹¹ Indeed, building any society requires ideas and vision. Yet, the place of the French language in the ideas and vision constituting the Saskatchewan political community have not been examined systematically by historians. As historian R. Douglas Francis noted, even as western Canadian historiography reached its maturity as a subfield of Canadian history during the 1980s¹², few works dealt directly

⁹ "Defining the Prairies: or, why the prairies don't exist," in Robert Wardhaugh (ed.), *Toward Defining the Prairies: Region, Culture, and History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2001), 14.

¹⁰ It is well accepted by Saskatchewan historians that the province's early years continue to play a determining role in how Saskatchewan society is lived today. See for example Gregory P. Marchildon (ed.) *The Heavy Hand of History: Interpreting Saskatchewan's Past* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005).

¹¹ Friesen, "Defining the Prairies," 14.

¹² J.R. Miller argued convincingly in 1985 that western Canadian historiography had entered into a new era marked by an increasingly mature scholarship. Miller, "Farewell to Monks, Eunuchs, and Vestal Virgins: Recent Western Canadian Historical Writing," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 20, no. 3 (1985), 156-166.

with the "mental ethos - the intellectual mindset and cultural milieu - of the region."¹³ Francis called on historians to look at "political, economic or social history from the perspective of ideas, beliefs or values motivating men and women to act," so as to make the connection between ideas and action.¹⁴ This dissertation looks at the mental ethos surrounding the place of the French language and cultural dualism in Saskatchewan for over a century, demonstrating various dynamics of continuity and change along the way.

Two major eras are crucial to understanding the place of French in the Saskatchewan political community: the founding political years (1870 to 1931) and the decades of political rebirth of the New West (1968 to 1990). Between 1870 and 1931, western Canada was created and became a "political" region.¹⁵ It was a time of broad visions and of major debates over the character of the political community in the newest part of Canada. During these years the region developed a political consciousness.¹⁶ The West was to be a British region, and Saskatchewan a British province; this understanding of the regional political community led to legislation and policies in Saskatchewan that ensured the predominance of English, especially in public institutions (the legislature and courts, for example) and education.

Between 1968 and 1990, western Canada was reborn due to economic renewal and constitutional politics. Saskatchewan debated the character of the political community and the place of French within its provincial borders. Although in 1968 Britishness was no longer

¹³ R. Douglas Francis, "In Search of a Prairie Myth: A Survey of Intellectual and Cultural Historiography of Prairie Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, no. 3 (1989), 44. On French Canadians and the West, Francis simply mentioned that "Considerably less work has been done on this subject." *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵ W.L. Morton, "The Bias of Prairie Politics" in Donald Swainson (ed.), *Historical Essays on the Prairie Provinces* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1970), 289-300.

¹⁶ See for example Morton, *Ibid.*; Doug Owsram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980); Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984); Friesen, "The Western Canadian Identity," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* (1973), 13-19; Friesen, "Studies in the Development of Western Canadian Regional Consciousness, 1880-1925," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1974.

fashionable as a social and political ideal for Saskatchewan, the influence of the province's formative years remained, as successive provincial governments reinforced the predominantly English character of Saskatchewan in major debates over language, identity, and the constitution. The complicated and protracted debate over bilingualism and the place of French in Saskatchewan between 1968 and 1990 was, in part, a product of the province's founding political era. Bilingualism, and official status for French, were cast by the government and applied in public policy as incongruous with the region's historical and contemporary character. At the same time, the Fransaskois¹⁷ community aggressively advocated for French as an official language in a number of policy areas.

At key moments of Saskatchewan's political history -- or, whenever there was a crisis of state legitimacy or a threat to the established cultural definition of the region -- successive governments ensured that official bilingualism would be limited. Even between 1968 and 1990, when the federal government made important strides towards expanding official bilingualism in federal institutions and francophone education, the Fransaskois community had difficulty advancing its own vision of bilingualism. Thus, between 1870 and 1990, although the debate over the character of Saskatchewan changed from a British-centric to province-centric, multicultural one, the problematic place of the francophones remained constant.

Fransaskois activism and memory were a constant threat to the Saskatchewan province-building project, a persistent annoyance to grandiose plans. As this study demonstrates, the francophones were often seen as either leading challenges to anglo-centrism, or directly involved in challenging it in a number of ways. Francophone political aspirations and public militancy

¹⁷ For the purposes of this study, the terms "Fransaskois", "francophone", and other terms related to individuals who speak French as their first language are used interchangeably. Although who exactly could claim membership and who was excluded from the Saskatchewan francophone political community varied over time, these divergences are not among the principal concerns of this study.

were lightning rods for those who articulated a particular cultural vision of Saskatchewan. The francophone understanding of western Canada as bilingual, where French speakers played an important role in founding the region, represented an unacceptable historical interpretation. It also reminded westerners of what bothered them most about Ottawa: meddling in economic and cultural matters, and showing favouritism towards Quebec in constitutional and political matters.

French in the "Imagined West"

Recent historical scholarship on western Canada analyses various aspects of the "imagined West", such as the place of women, indigenous peoples, and immigrants. Scholars have also examined shifting popular and intellectual understandings of geography, mineral wealth, and science. They have examined the myth of the Mountie and the western myth in literature.¹⁸ Historians have not, however, taken a closer look at how the French language fits into the imagined West and the "mental ethos" of the region. Gerald Friesen, for example, noted how "the inevitable issue of French-Canadian and Roman Catholic influence in the country" helped influence westerners' perceptions of themselves and the region.¹⁹ Friesen, however, like other historians of the region, directed his attention toward labour history and other aspects of

¹⁸ See for example R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan (eds.), *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2007); Owrarn, *Promise of Eden*; Catherine A. Cavanaugh, "No Place for a Woman: Engendering Western Canadian Settlement," *Western Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1997), 493-518; G.S. Dunbar, "Isotherms and Politics: Perceptions of the North-West in the 1850s," in A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen (eds.), *Prairie Perspectives 2* (Toronto, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), 80-102; Douglas Francis, "From Wasteland to Utopia: Changing Images of the Canadian West in the Nineteenth Century," *Great Plains Quarterly* (Summer 1987), 178-194; D.J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy, 1896-1905," in Howard Palmer, *The Settlement of the West* (Calgary, Comprint Publishing, 1977), 60-85; Bill Waiser, *The Field Naturalist: John Macoun, the Geological Survey, and Natural Science* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1989). For more recent examples, see Steve Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue: The Transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914-1939* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2006); Adele Perry, Esyllt Jones and Leah Morton, *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada* (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2013); Ashleigh Androsoff, "Spirit Wrestling: Identity Conflict and the Canadian 'Doukhobor Problem', 1899-1999," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011.

¹⁹ Friesen, "The Western Canadian Identity," 16.

social history, only briefly mentioning the role that francophones and the French language played in the formation of a "regional consciousness" in western Canada.

In the English literature, historians have paid limited attention to the French-language question in western Canada, leading some to conclude that it was not important. Celebrated Canadian historian Donald Creighton declared that bilingualism in western Canada was nothing more than "a claim exacted by Riel's dictatorship."²⁰ Manitoban W.L. Morton wrote that Riel's push for official recognition of French was premature and that "there would have been a later and perhaps a greater Manitoba, without the Resistance."²¹ A.I. Silver, who built his reputation as a historian of the French-Canadian idea of Confederation, went as far to say that French Canadians had no interest in western Canada or business being there because they were "far from the condition of any of the great colonizing societies"²² and not up to the task.

More recent scholarship examining the economic choices of French Canadians in choosing to settle the West concludes that "Moving to the western frontier was much less economically attractive for francophones than anglophones."²³ The English-language literature, and a handful of French-language works, tend to either blame the francophones for their own choices in the social development of the region, or sweep aside the region's language controversies as historical aberrations or accidents.²⁴ The result is a gap in the literature, especially as it pertains to francophones in western Canada after the Second World War. More

²⁰ Donald Creighton, "John A. Macdonald, Confederation, and the Canadian West," in *Minorities, Schools, and Politics*, Canadian Historical Readings 7 (University of Toronto Press, 1969), 1-9.

²¹ W.L. Morton, "Introduction," in *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal*, (Toronto, Champlain Society, 1957), 147.

²² A.I. Silver, "French Canada and the Prairie Frontier, 1870-1890," *Canadian Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1969), 29.

²³ Alan Green, Mary MacKinnon, and Chris Minns, "Conspicuous by their Absence: French Canadians and the Settlement of the West," *Journal of Economic History* 65, no. 3 (September 2005), 824.

²⁴ A.I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997); André-N. Lalonde, "L'intelligentsia du Québec et la migration des Canadiens Français vers l'ouest canadien, 1870-1930," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 33, no. 2 (1979), 163-185; Robert Painchaud, *Un rève français dans le peuplement de la Prairie* (Saint-Boniface, Éditions du Blé, 1987).

generally, western Canadian historical literature does not concentrate strongly on the region's history after 1945.²⁵

Francophone historians, especially in Quebec, have also taken little interest in the imagined West, focusing instead on why western Canada was a lost cause for French Canadians and official bilingualism. They cite in particular the treatment of Louis Riel and the French-speaking Métis, the Manitoba Schools Crisis, and Franco-Catholic colonization schemes' failure to produce meaningful results.²⁶ One of the more enduring ideas in French-language literature dealing with the francophone experience in the West is that "anglomania" or British Canadian nationalism discouraged many French speakers from settling in the region.²⁷ But why did this happen? What exactly led to the prevailing idea that the West was not a place for French speakers? How did this idea start and how did it change over time? This dissertation offers some answers to these questions.

Western Canadian francophone authors have written some impressive social and political histories of their own communities.²⁸ It is mainly concerned, however, with early twentieth

²⁵ See for example Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies* or Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary, Fifth House, 2005). Friesen only gives one chapter to the prairies after 1945, while Waiser dedicates two-thirds of his book to Saskatchewan before 1945.

²⁶ Robert Painchaud, "French-Canadian Historiography and Franco-Catholic Settlement in Western Canada, 1870-1915," *Canadian Historical Review* 59, no. 4 (1978), 447-466. Edmund Aunger also underlined the tendency of both Québécois nationalists and English-Canadian historians to minimize the importance and role of French language issues in western Canadian history in "Obsèques prématurées: La disparition des minorités francophones et autres illusions nationalistes," *Review of Constitutional Studies* 7, nos. 1-2 (2002), 120-142.

²⁷ See for example Dom Paul Benoît, *L'anglomanie au Canada: Résumé historique de la question des écoles du Manitoba* (Trois-Rivières, Imprimerie du Trifluvien, 1899); Noël Bernier, *Fannystelle* (Quebec, Imprimerie franciscaine missionnaire, 1939); Jacqueline Blay, *Sous le ciel de la Prairie, des débuts jusqu'à 1870*, Tome I, *Histoire du Manitoba français* (Saint-Boniface, Éditions du Blé, 2010) and *Le temps des outrages*, Tome II, *Histoire du Manitoba français* (Saint-Boniface, Éditions du Blé, 2013); Donatien Frémont, *Les Français dans l'Ouest canadien* (Winnipeg, Éditions de la Liberté, 1959); A.G. Morice, *Dictionnaire historique des Canadiens et des Métis français de l'Ouest* (Quebec, J.-P. Garneau, 1908); Louis-Arthur Prud'Homme, *L'élément français au Nord-Ouest et son action bienfaisante* (Ottawa, Société royale du Canada, 1933).

²⁸ See for example France Levasseur-Ouimet, *D'Année en année: Une présentation synchronique des événements historiques franco-albertains* (Edmonton, Institut du patrimoine de la Faculté Saint-Jean, 2003); Levasseur-Ouimet, *Léo Piquette: Militer pour ses droits francophones, en souvenir de l'Affaire Piquette* (Sainte-Foy, Quebec, Éditions du GID, 2006); Jacqueline Blay, *L'Article 23: Les Péripéties législatives et juridiques du fait français au Manitoba* (Saint-Boniface, Éditions du Blé, 1987); Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français*; Hébert, *Manitoba's French-Language*

century community history, especially the pioneering and settlement era up to the Great Depression. In *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, for example -- currently the only scholarly survey history of the province's francophones -- Fransaskois historians Richard Lapointe and Lucille Tessier discussed the history of the Fransaskois community up to the end of the 1930s.²⁹ In 1983, the Société historique de la Saskatchewan released *Perspectives sur la Saskatchewan française*, a scholarly and popular collection of writings on Fransaskois history. As with other community histories, it focused exclusively on Franco-Catholic colonization and the period preceding the Second World War. Even Éric Poliquin's *Le Patriote de l'Ouest et les grands événements du XXe siècle*³⁰ -- a promising title and presentation of Saskatchewan's first French newspaper -- dealt only with the first half of the twentieth century.

Western Canadian francophone historical literature focuses primarily on the construction of institutions such as the Catholic church, schools, and cultural associations. Despite the importance of the post-1970 era of Francophone history in western Canada, it has been largely overlooked.³¹ In 1972 Saskatchewan historian Michael Jackson wrote an article decrying the lack of studies on the Fransaskois despite their strong contribution to the history of Saskatchewan and western Canada.³² Jackson, however, misunderstood the Fransaskois propensity for resilience and argued that the community might eventually disappear. Measures taken to reinforce struggling Fransaskois communities, Jackson wrote, had arrived "ten or fifteen years too late" and all roads pointed towards linguistic and cultural assimilation.³³

Crisis; Laurier Gareau (ed.), *50 ans de radio: tant de choses à se dire* (Regina, Éditions de la Nouvelle plume, 2002).

²⁹ Regina, Société historique de la Saskatchewan, 1986.

³⁰ Regina, Société historique de la Saskatchewan, 1997.

³¹ Georgina M. Taylor, "Editor's Comments (the Francophone Population is Among the Previously Neglected Topics Covered in Current Saskatchewan History)," *Saskatchewan History* 52, no.1 (2000), 2-4.

³² Jackson, "Une minorité ignorée: les Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadienne* 7, no. 3 (1972), 1-20.

³³ *Ibid.*, 19.

Literature on francophone-anglophone relations and language politics in the latter twentieth century is lively. This stream of literature makes note of political campaigns for official bilingualism, but is primarily national in scope and mentions western Canada chiefly in passing. Historical events, people, and contexts surrounding language rights politics in western Canada remain to be explored systematically. Québécois social historian Yves Frenette, for example, only briefly discussed Saskatchewan's *Mercur* case in his classic social history survey of French Canada.³⁴ Marcel Martel and Martin Pâquet discuss language politics in western Canada in their survey of the political history of language in Canada, but their account as it pertains to Saskatchewan is very brief.³⁵ A number of other historical works that offer compelling analyses of various federal government language policies do not discuss western Canada generally or Saskatchewan specifically.³⁶

This dissertation draws upon literature in a number of fields of study in western Canadian history, francophone history, and language politics in order to examine the *longue durée* of language politics in Saskatchewan between 1870 and 1990. What languages should be spoken in the West, and why? What language should be given official recognition in Saskatchewan? How do public institutions in Saskatchewan -- the Legislature, Courts, cultural policies, and schools, for example -- reflect continuity and change in the imagined West? In answering these questions, this dissertation explains where the French language fits into the imagined West. Both the historical trajectory of Saskatchewan and later understandings of the province's history have led

³⁴ *Brève histoire des Canadiens français*, 189-190.

³⁵ *Speaking Up: A History of Language and Politics in Canada and Quebec* (Toronto, Between the Lines, 2012).

³⁶ See for example Michael Behiels, *Canada's Francophone Minority Communities: Constitutional Renewal and the Winning of School Governance* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Matthew Hayday, *Bilingual Today, United Tomorrow: Official Languages in Education and Canadian Federalism* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Hayday, "Canada's Bilingual Education Revolution: The B&B Commission and Official Languages in Education." *Canadian Issues / Thèmes Canadiennes* (Fall 2013): 29-33; Hayday, *So They Want us to Learn French: Promoting and Opposing Bilingualism in English-Speaking Canada* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2015); and Daniel Bourgeois, *Canadian Bilingual Districts: From Cornerstone to Tombstone* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

to political controversies over the place of French within the provincial political community. As a result of history and historical perception, Saskatchewan has a political culture resistant to official bilingualism and French as an official language.

This study also challenges the idea that francophones and the language question did not play an important role in the development of the region. It argues that francophones and the French language can be found in major political debates surrounding the nature of the political community in Saskatchewan. This study, therefore, offers a novel interpretation of Saskatchewan political history by showing where the French language fits into the province's political community. It demonstrates that the language question, rather than being peripheral or marginal to Saskatchewan's historical trajectory, was among the fundamental factors which shaped how Saskatchewan articulated and understood its own political culture and destiny. As historians Marcel Martel and Martin Pâquet argue in their work on the history language and politics in Canada,

Language is a political issue because political actors assign it intrinsic value. Indeed, French, English, and indigenous languages in Canada and Quebec are not neutral modes of communication...languages reveal the socio-historical reality of struggles, of relations of domination, and inequalities within society...In Canada and Quebec the language issue, in all its facets and across history, has been at the very heart of political interactions.³⁷

Building on this assertion, the present study seeks to unveil and demonstrate the intrinsic value assigned to French in western Canada, using Saskatchewan as a case study. In doing so it reveals the extent to which French language politics played a key role in the way Saskatchewanians viewed themselves and their political culture.

Memories, Politics, and Constitutions

³⁷ *Speaking Up*, 3-4.

One of the more prominent themes discussed in this dissertation is the role of memory in political mobilisation and political action.³⁸ Memory, built on a certain interpretation of history, is a critical piece in articulating vision and political demands. As the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs wrote,

We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated.³⁹

Historian Patrick Hutton, in *History as an Art of Memory*, takes a similar approach to understanding how memory influences perceptions of past and present.⁴⁰ For Hutton, there is a confluence of history and memory, wherein intellectual and cultural traditions come together to create historical interpretations. All history, Hutton explains, has traces of different cultural understandings of the past. It is up to the historian to uncover "the deep sources of memory underpinning history" and uncover how memory motivates historical writing and human agency.⁴¹

It is at this level of analysis that memory is important in understanding how a political community is constructed. Whose history becomes official? What is the community's memory? Whose identity is perpetuated? Which interpretations are given the benefit of public endorsement in law, school curriculum, and public discourse? In the case of competing francophone and anglophone memories, historian Paul Romney's *Getting it Wrong: How Canadians Forgot their*

³⁸ Community memory and understandings of history and historical legitimacy are central to political action. As Michelle Landry, Martin Pâquet and Anne Gilbert argue, francophone minority communities in Canada "se servent ainsi de la mémoire pour mobiliser le groupe dans des mouvements de sauvegarde de la langue et de la culture ainsi que de développement communautaire." See Landry, Pâquet, and Gilbert (dirs.), *Mémoires et mobilisations* (Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2015), 3. See also Michel Bock, "Se souvenir et oublier: la mémoire du Canada français, hier et aujourd'hui," in Joseph Yvon Thériault, Anne Gilbert and Linda Cardinal, *L'Espace francophone en milieu minoritaire au Canada: Nouveaux enjeux, nouvelles mobilisations* (Montreal, Fides, 2008), 161-203; and Joseph-Yvon Thériault and É.-Martin Meunier, "Que reste-t-il de l'intention vitale du Canada français?" in *Ibid.*, 206-238.

³⁹ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 27.

⁴⁰ *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, University Press of New England, 1993).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

*Past and Imperilled Confederation*⁴², shows the importance of memory and historical interpretation in divergent understandings of the Canadian constitution. Romney writes that

Like Quebec nationalism, Canadian nationalism rests on a vision of history. The basic idea is that the Fathers of Confederation set out to found a great nation, with a strong central government having dominion from sea to sea and with provincial governments of subordinate stature exercising municipal powers. Such a notion leaves scant room for the idea of local autonomy inherent in the provincial compact theory, or for that of special status for Quebec.⁴³

While Romney's study focuses primarily on the national unity debate and French/English nationalisms in Canada, its conclusion that contemporary political ideas rest on memory or "visions of history" is instructive. This dissertation builds on Romney's work by demonstrating how both the Fransaskois community and the Saskatchewan government used different memories of province, region, and nation in order to advance their respective visions of bilingualism.

The study of memory, consciousness, ideas, and politics is not the sole prerogative of historians. This dissertation uses methodological tools from other disciplines in order to fully understand its topic. The work of sociologist Wilfrid Denis, for example, applies the Gramscian concept of ideological hegemony to political struggles for and against bilingualism and francophone schools.⁴⁴ Denis, using an approach that spans several decades or a century, underlines the sociological processes of Anglo-hegemony in Saskatchewan. He argues that scholars should examine "the cumulative effects of legislation" on the province's francophone minority.⁴⁵ According to Denis,

⁴² Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1999.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁴ "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan: Resisting Anglo-Hegemony," in Brian Noonan, Dianne Hallman and Murray Scharf (eds.), *A History of Education in Saskatchewan: Selected Readings* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2006), 87-108.

⁴⁵ See for example Wilfrid Denis and Peter Li, "The Politics of Language Loss: a Francophone case from Western Canada," *Journal of Education Policy* 3, no. 4 (1988), 351-370; Wilfrid Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan"; "Ethnicité et conflits scolaires en Saskatchewan en 1905-1980," in Linda Cardinal (ed.), *Une langue*

Languages respond to changes in environment; they flourish or die more as the outcome of power struggles, of relations of oppression and resistance among groups in specific socio-historical contexts, rather than through any intrinsic quality or weakness. Language regimes usually materialize from unrelated government policies which combine to support one language to the detriment of all others; the long-term effects of such regimes usually outlast the actual policies.⁴⁶

Denis views the combined impact of language legislation, in addition to cultural policies, as forming the basis of a province's "language regime."⁴⁷ Because legislation has cumulative and long-lasting social effects, Denis explains, it is important to understand the historical formulation of a language regime. The language regime reflects ideological hegemony or "the manner by which a dominant class imposes its culture, ideology and world view on subordinate groups."⁴⁸

As Denis points out, the link between ideology and practice is important in understanding power relations surrounding language in public institutions. In this vein, in order to examine the "mental ethos" or "regional consciousness" present in Saskatchewan, it is important to go beyond the enunciation of ideas and vision in politics and examine how these are put into place. Gerald Friesen suggests, for example, that one way of measuring how consciousness and mentalities have influenced history is to examine institutions which provide concrete examples of consciousness as a mechanism for change.⁴⁹ Political scientists Linda Cardinal and Selma Sonntag suggest using the concept of language regime, which denotes "language practices as well as conceptions of language and language use as projected through state policies and as acted upon by language users."⁵⁰

qui pense (Ottawa, Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1993), 77-100; "Language Policy in Canada," in Peter S. Li (ed.), *Race and Ethnic Relations in Canada* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1990), 148-185.

⁴⁶ Denis, "Language in Saskatchewan: Anglo-Hegemony Maintained," in John Edwards (ed.), *Language in Canada* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 439.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 425.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Friesen, "The Western Canadian Identity," 19.

⁵⁰ Linda Cardinal and Selma Sonntag, *State Traditions and Language Regimes* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 6.

Cardinal and Sonntag stress three key concepts for analysing language regimes: state tradition, path dependency, and critical junctures. State tradition denotes "the institutional and normative baggage and patterns of state action." Path dependency is what "marks the path that states take in policy-making."⁵¹ The notion of "critical junctures" refers to

...pivotal points between tradition and policy. A critical juncture may be presented by social, political, economic, or environmental crises or dramatic change...At critical junctures, state traditions are often reinvented. What emerge are new patterns of governance -- but ones never completely divorced from the old.⁵²

All three concepts are germane for a historical study of language politics. Both state tradition and path dependency imply a specific historical context and trajectory, which must be understood through rigorous reference to documentary materials. This dissertation, as a work of history, is grounded in a systematic analysis of source materials in order to elucidate change and continuity in the Saskatchewan case: newspapers, Parliamentary debates, government policy documents, speeches, briefs, and francophone community organization documents.

Critical junctures help determine the periodization of a historical study. They are moments "when the state traditions that underpin the language regime are vulnerable."⁵³ In the case of Saskatchewan, these moments are: the annexation and early political years of the North-West Territories (1870 to 1905), the creation of Saskatchewan in 1905, the province's early political years (1905 to 1931), and Saskatchewan's emergence as part of the new western Canada and new Canadian constitutional order (1968-1990). The causes of critical junctures are not always the same, nor are they singular. Many different factors weigh into why a critical juncture occurs at one moment or another. Critical junctures do not apply uniquely to language regimes. Other western Canadian historians such as Steve Hewitt, for example, have studied key moments

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

in state development or change. In *Riding to the Rescue* Hewitt argues that between 1914 and 1939 the Canadian government greatly depended on the RCMP in order to maintain Anglo-Saxon values in a time of war, mass immigration, industrialization, and political radicalism.⁵⁴

Hewitt's understanding of Saskatchewan's critical junctures demonstrates the necessity of a strong police force, at least as far as the government was concerned, in order to maintain the state's semblance of social order. Similarly, this dissertation argues that critical junctures in Saskatchewan history necessitated strong statements and action on the province's language regime. During times of political and cultural uncertainty, governments moved to maintain the vision of one official language (English) and unilingual schooling for society. This vision, like Hewitt's RCMP between 1914 and 1939, was a question of state power, social order and societal harmony. On the other hand, during critical junctures a language regime may be contested. The francophones used critical junctures to challenge Saskatchewan's provincial language regime, knowing they could possibly make advances towards official bilingualism.

According to Cardinal and Sonntag, in order to understand the various facets of a language regime, scholars need to

look at the dynamic context -- historical, institutional, normative -- in which the state chooses language policies...What are the principles that inform state actions on language matters? What are the institutional and administrative parameters of how the state governs languages? How and why does the state intervene in language choice and language use? State traditions guide the path dependency of language policy choices; they frame how those choices are conceived.⁵⁵

In other words, the term "regime" should not be mistaken to mean only the constitution or institutions of a state. The notion of regime, rooted in Greek philosophy, was first elaborated upon systematically in Plato's *Republic*. *Republic*, a translation from the Greek *politeia* (Πολιτεία), denotes much more than the type of government in a state. It encompasses the values

⁵⁴ Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*.

⁵⁵ *State Traditions and Language Regimes*, 5.

of a political community or the "overall project of common life, including programs of education, the organization of labour and leisure, moral rules...."⁵⁶ This dissertation, using a long historical perspective, offers an account of the values articulated in politics and society on the place of French in Saskatchewan. It also discusses how the state implements language ideology, and how language users interact with the state over time. More specifically, this dissertation not only looks at the historical context and overall government vision on the French language, but also how this vision was applied through internal government processes and policies. In several places, it stresses the contested nature of language and cultural policy by examining how the francophone community and other minority groups like the Ukrainians viewed government language policy and contributed to its elaboration through various means of political manoeuvring.

The major analytical concept tying all of these elements together -- mental ethos, western regional identity/consciousness, memory, language ideology, and language regime -- is *political culture*. While mainly employed by political scientists, it has also been used by some Canadian historians.⁵⁷ Canadian political scientist Nelson Wiseman broadly defines political culture as "the way of life of a political community or polity."⁵⁸ More specifically, Wiseman explains, "Political culture refers to deeply rooted, popularly held beliefs, values, and attitudes about politics."⁵⁹ Wiseman's analysis "is intended to cast light on how Canada, its people, and political institutions

⁵⁶ Francis Wolf, "Polis and Politeia," in Barbara Cassin (ed.), *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2014), 80.

⁵⁷ "To come to terms with Canada's political culture requires some grounding in Canadian history." Wiseman, *In Search of Canadian Political Culture* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2007), 14. See also, for example, Carol Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture in Upper Canada, 1800-1850* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).

⁵⁸ Wiseman, *In Search of Canadian Political Culture*, 13.

⁵⁹ Wiseman, "Provincial Political Cultures," in Christopher Dunn (ed.) *Provinces: Canadian Provincial Politics* (Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2006), 21.

came to be what they are today rather than what they ought to or could be in the light of contemporary norms and values."⁶⁰

There is a key relationship between political culture and institutions. As Wiseman argues, the "radical distinction between 'institutions' and 'culture'" should be abandoned because

Culture and institutions have a symbiotic relationship. Like cultures, institutions are customary structures and practices...Like political culture, institutions are inherited. They are not commonly the products of contemporary will but of heritage and tradition. They cut across time in a way that individual lifespans do not; like cultures, they are constantly evolving, declining, forming, and being renegotiated. To see culture as determining institutional form is too one-sided. The causal arrow points both ways because culture is a response learned from living under certain conditions.⁶¹

At the same time, government and political institutions are not simply dominated by society, nor are they shaped passively by societal practices. Governments enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. They set agendas and use extensive economic and political resources to achieve ends that may or may not reflect societal realities. Since the 1980s American political scientist and sociologist Theda Skocpol, along with other authors, have argued that the role of the state in shaping society needs to be taken more seriously. Skocpol's work calls for a more complex understanding of politics and the state, wherein the latter enjoys much more autonomy and freedom to act than previous authors believed.⁶²

Wiseman's concept of political culture borrowed heavily from Louis Hartz' classic "fragmentation thesis." In *The Founding of New Societies*⁶³, Hartz argued that New World societies, broken off from the Old World, retain key political-ideological elements that dominated the Old World. French Canada (Hartz refers almost exclusively to Quebec), for

⁶⁰ Wiseman, *In Search of Canadian Political Culture*, 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶² Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985); see also, for example, Eric Nordlinger, *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁶³ Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia* (New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964).

example, was a society that retained much of its feudal origins. But, Hartz explained, fragmented ideology, detached from its original Old World context, had more possibilities in the New World than it did in the Old. In the New World, ideological fragments no longer had the same political and ideological competition. As a result, detached from its original context, fragmented ideology becomes an implicit and dominant assumption that is almost universal. New World fragment societies provide the ability to move beyond old ideological battles that characterized the original society. Lacking competition, fragment ideologies tend to evolve into a "new nationalism" which uses certain understandings of history and society in order to integrate newcomers and assure social cohesion.⁶⁴

Hartz applied his theory to a number of New World societies, but it was not until the 1980s that western Canadian historians began to explore how the fragmentation thesis could explain the history of the region. During the 1980s fragmentation became a well-used perspective in western Canadian historiography. A number of works understood the West as a fragment of British Ontario or Britain. In the case of ranching, for example, historian David H. Breen argued that an upper middle-class and distinctly British-Ontarian form of ranching took hold in the West during the region's early settlement years.⁶⁵

The fragmentation thesis competes in the western Canadian literature with Frederick Jackson Turner's classic *frontier thesis*.⁶⁶ Turner and contemporary proponents of this thesis argue that the frontier was a place of freedom and new ideas, where the hold of Old World institutions was weak. Legal authority was dubious and environmental and climactic factors played important roles in determining the shape of society. University of Calgary historian

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-14.

⁶⁵ D.H. Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874-1924* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983).

⁶⁶ F.J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," paper read at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, 12 July 1983.

Warren Elofson, for example, used the frontier thesis to demonstrate similarities between Canadian and American ranching practices at the turn of the twentieth century.⁶⁷

This study engages both the fragmentation and frontier theses in order to understand the way in which the French language question fit into the history of western Canada as a region and Saskatchewan as a province. Both theories, though often opposed to one another in the literature, are useful to understanding the place of the French language in the Saskatchewan political community. In the case of the frontier thesis, this study is inspired by Canadian historian Doug Owrarn's assertion that the western Canadian frontier was an intellectual one -- an imagined frontier.⁶⁸ The region was seen by expansionists as a social *tabula rasa* where British-Ontarian society could be implemented and flourish, free from the divisive and never-ending political battles between English and French speakers in Ontario and Quebec. The fact that expansionists believed the region to be "empty" and waiting to be populated through mass settlement meant that, in the new West, British Ontario had an opportunity to break away from the problems of older Canada.

The Hartzian fragmentation thesis and political culture are also useful tools for approaching the French language question in Saskatchewan. By examining the ideological fragment broken off from the "Old World" of central Canada and implemented in the "New World" of the West, it is possible to understand why French language rights and official bilingualism were so controversial in the region. Breaking away from Old Canada meant leaving bilingualism and French language rights behind. The new fragment retained the British Ontarian desire for one nation and one language that was constantly thwarted and frustrated by Quebec in

⁶⁷ Warren Elofson, *Cowboys, Gentlemen, and Cattle Thieves: Ranching on the Western Frontier* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000). See also Elofson, "The Universality of Frontier Disorder: Northern Australia Viewed Against the Northern Great Plains of North America," *Agricultural History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2014), 147-174.

⁶⁸ Owrarn, *Promise of Eden*.

central Canada. In the West, however, it was possible for the British-Ontarian fragment to triumph.

In this vein, by examining continuity and changes in the Saskatchewan political community, this dissertation explains why official bilingualism was, and to an extent remains, controversial in the province. Political culture and the fragmentation thesis both allow for a fuller understanding of the prairie cultural reality. According to historian J.E. Rea, "From the clash of the early pioneers with the *métis*, the most persistent social theme of the Prairies has been the struggle for cultural dominance."⁶⁹ Rea argued that the West was more fragment than frontier, but accepted that both theories contributed to understanding the region's history. W.L. Morton, a pioneer of the "region and nation" approach to western Canadian history⁷⁰, also hinted at the importance of the past in setting the stage for contemporary clashes over bilingualism and biculturalism in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷¹ While both Rea⁷² and Morton did not explicitly reference political culture, in 1981 Canadian political scientist David E. Smith published a chapter on the topic. Smith argued that western political culture and bilingualism were

Perhaps the most critical question at this time...the attitude of the west to Canada's fundamental norm of cultural dualism, a norm present for over two hundred years, confirmed in the last decade by the federal government's language legislation and challenged in the west since the beginning of this century.⁷³

Smith concluded that more studies of western Canadian political culture as it related to bilingualism, multiculturalism, and language were necessary. Smith also called for more studies

⁶⁹ Rea, "The Roots of Prairie Society," in David P. Gagan (ed.), *Prairie Perspectives* (Toronto, Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1970), 46.

⁷⁰ Carl Berger, "William Morton: The Delicate Balance of Region and Nation," in *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986).

⁷¹ W.L. Morton, "The West and the Nation, 1870-1970," in A.W. Rasporich and Henry C. Klassen, *Prairie Perspectives 2* (Toronto, Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1973), 8-24.

⁷² Rea did, however, argue that "Our immediate starting point must be the recognition of the fact that the contemporary culture of the Canadian Prairies dates roughly from the decade of the 1880's." Rea, "The Roots of Prairie Society," 46-47.

⁷³ David E. Smith, "Political culture in the west," in David Jay Bercuson and Phillip A. Buckner, *Eastern and Western Perspectives* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1981), 170.

on the values promulgated by British Canadians in the early history region so as to better understand why the West so strongly rejected cultural dualism after the 1960s.⁷⁴

Wiseman's method for analyzing political culture resembles Smith's 1981 paper. Wiseman looks at the relationship between province, region, and nation using a multifaceted approach: "probing history" or investigating which political/social movements succeeded or failed over time, and why; examining fundamental political beliefs and how they shape society; and analysing cultural meanings in constitutions and institutions.⁷⁵ Applied to this dissertation, Wiseman's framework and the concept of political culture allow for a study that combines the key notions discussed above: the "mental ethos" (Francis) or "western regional identity/consciousness" (Friesen), "language ideology and hegemony" (Denis), and "language regime" (Cardinal and Sonntag). This study probes history by examining where the status of French fits into the bigger Saskatchewan historical picture. Political and social movements in favour or against bilingualism are analysed. It examines fundamental political beliefs by unveiling where French and francophones fit into the "mental ethos" of western Canada and Saskatchewan. Fundamental beliefs are also unveiled through studies of the rhetoric and ideas advanced by proponents and opponents of bilingualism. This study also describes the Saskatchewan language regime by analysing how political movements and beliefs over time were translated into concrete policies, laws, and institutional practices.

Dissertation Structure and Chapter Overview

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁷⁵ See for example Wiseman, "Provincial Political Cultures," in Christopher Dunn (ed.), *Provinces: Canadian Provincial Politics* (Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2006), 21-56; also Wiseman, *In Search of Canadian Political Culture*.

Two fundamental questions underpin this study. The first is: what is the place of the French language in the Saskatchewan political community? Answering this question may, at first glance, seem straightforward based on social factors such as a small French-speaking community or the lack of French-speaking immigration to western Canada during its formative years. But governments also help form society, and politics is the arena in which competing visions of the social sphere fight for primacy. Governments decide what versions of history students learn, what languages are used in the education system, and what languages are recognized as having official status in public institutions. If social forces are the only deciding factors in deciding who speaks what language, why do governments legislate on language use at all? The answer lies in the *politeia*, the process of building a community and searching for an ideal society. While today Saskatchewan may be an English-speaking province, this status was anything but secure during its history. A study of the nature of government intervention in official languages and cultural policy over time answers this first question.

The second question of this dissertation is how a small linguistic and cultural minority organizes itself and makes its voice heard. The Fransaskois were never passive bystanders in debates over the character of Saskatchewan society. Yet, the community underwent fundamental changes in how it applied its activism. When the ACFC was founded in 1912, it was modest in its demands on government and quiet in its political strategy; by 1990, the organization was a small but important player not only in provincial debates over official languages but also national debates on the constitution and national unity. Over time, the Fransaskois acquired the necessary political expertise and professionalism that allowed them to effectively influence the provincial government in their favour. Thus, the second fundamental question is answered in this study by

looking at continuity and change in Fransaskois community leadership, in addition to Fransaskois-government relations.

This study is divided into two major parts: the founding political years of Saskatchewan (1870 to 1931) and the rise of the new West (1968 to 1990). Chapters one and two form the first part of the study, and provide the general context and outline of the major tenets of Anglo-centrism during key events in Saskatchewan's early history. Chapter one discusses the French language during the Territorial years, while chapter two covers Saskatchewan's first generation of politics. Chapters three to five comprise part two, and are individual case studies of key areas of cultural policy between 1968 and 1990 when Saskatchewan dealt with official bilingualism and Fransaskois community activism in various ways. The periodization of these chapters is arranged thematically.

Significant contextual differences exist between the two parts or periods under examination. During the early years (1870-1931), the Fransaskois community made active attempts to influence the outcome of debates on political community and the French language. The clergy and secular leaders opted for good relations or *la bonne entente* in order to accomplish their goals. This strategy entailed, for the most part, working behind the scenes in order to broker compromises and keep the most extreme anti-French elements in society at bay. The provincial rights movement in national politics and federal non-intervention in provincial language issues gave the Fransaskois community little choice in this strategy.

The years between the two eras - 1931 to 1968 - have been excluded from this study because between 1931 and 1968, the question of the character of the Saskatchewan political community was seen as largely settled. Although some events such as the creation of larger

school units in 1944 contributed to the assimilation of francophones and other minority groups in the province, there were no major debates over the identity of the province itself.

The second part of the dissertation demonstrates a fundamental change in both Fransaskois community activism and overall national context regarding language. Between 1960 and 1980, the Quiet revolution and the rise of separatism as a political movement -- in addition to major federal intervention via the 1969 *Official Languages Act* and the official languages in education program -- rejuvenated Fransaskois activism. The Fransaskois community underwent changes as a new generation of well-educated, secular leaders took control of institutions such as the Association culturelle franco-canadienne (ACFC). The francophones seized advantage of a favourable national political context in order to advance their own vision of Saskatchewan history and official bilingualism within the province. They were vocal and persistent in their demands on the provincial government, using local and national media, position papers, meetings, and protests in order to have their voices heard. Successive Saskatchewan governments, realizing that they had a duty to uphold national unity but also understanding how unpopular some federal government policies were -- including French education and official languages policies -- took the middle road between expanding the place of French in some areas of Saskatchewan society and resisting its advance in others.

Chapter one of this study discusses the founding political years of the North-West Territories from 1870 to 1905, the year the federal government created Saskatchewan as a province. During these years, British Canadian settlers and a new English-speaking political elite did their best to ensure that the region would be British. Many political leaders not only believed that French Canadians should be discouraged from coming to the region during the major settlement era, but also vigorously resisted any attempts to give official status to the French

language.⁷⁶ As western Canadian historian Doug Owsram explains, hostility to the French language in both government institutions and schools made evident

...a deep-seated conviction that there was no room in the West for a recognized minority. The developing sense of identity had excluded the Métis Catholic traditions of Red River in favour of English Protestant traditions...The new Canada, it seemed, had not provided an answer to the questions that had plagued the older Canada. On the contrary, the new Canada was to be dragged into these old, eastern controversies. Rather than establish a society above racial and religious jealousy, the development of the west perpetuated animosities rooted in the colonial era.⁷⁷

Between 1870 and 1905, western Canada was racked by bitter and recurrent battles over French language schooling and French as an official language. The region did not escape from the bitter political struggles which also shaped eastern Canada. They would appear again and again -- in the first and second resistances led by Louis Riel, in Frederick Haultain's push for responsible government, and in the crisis over the Autonomy Bills.

Chapter two focuses on Saskatchewan's early provincial politics. It argues that the place of French was highly controversial in the new province as a result of major debates originating in the founding era of Territorial politics. As Saskatchewan historian Bill Waiser wrote in the province's centennial history, "the autonomy bill fiasco had unleashed the twin demons of religion and language, and future Saskatchewan governments would not escape them."⁷⁸ In some Saskatchewan political circles, deep resentment towards Ottawa's imposition of separate schools fuelled anger towards francophones. The bitter controversies over separate schools and the French language during the Autonomy bills debate in 1905 dogged Saskatchewan until the late 1920s, when the Conservative government of J.T.M. Anderson dealt definitively with both

⁷⁶ *Promise of Eden*, 97-98.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 221. Interestingly, although the target of the *Act to Provide that the English Language Shall be the Official Language of the Province of Manitoba*, 1890, c. 14 (Manitoba) and the new school law of 1890 were French Catholics and not the Métis, Owsram notes that "The Manitoba schools question finally gave English-Canadian expansionists their revenge for the Red River resistance of 1870." Owsram, *Promise of Eden*, 98.

⁷⁸ Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 10.

questions. Other provincial and national events stoked the fires of British Canadian nationalism, which in turn caused further problems for Saskatchewan's French-speaking minority: Quebec's position on conscription during the First World War, non-English language education, and cultural diversity owing to immigration. While the francophones quietly organized and did their best to fight back, they had few options for opposing this movement.

Chapter three analyses bilingualism and education policy in Saskatchewan between 1968 and 1990, when the government and the Fransaskois struggled over the place of French in the province's education system. During these years Saskatchewan began to move away from an education system based on former Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton's philosophy of "national schools" and assimilation towards a system based on diversity. Unfortunately, the transition was not smooth. Although Premier Ross Thatcher's Liberal government made, in 1967, some modest provisions for French education following the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, the Fransaskois found the changes unsatisfactory because French was still not an equal language with English in education. Like Thatcher's Liberals, both the NDP and Conservative governments that followed failed to make any changes to the provincial education system that would satisfy the Fransaskois' new demands for cultural and linguistic equality with English speakers. After many years of political and administrative struggles with various governments, the Fransaskois decided that the only solution was to turn to the courts. The difficulties in achieving full educational rights for francophone education are demonstrated by the *CEF v. Saskatchewan* case (1985 to 1988). Even with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* on their side, the Fransaskois had to fight a pitched battle with a recalcitrant provincial government in order to gain control over French-language education.

Chapter four looks at arguments for and against the multicultural character of Saskatchewan, and discusses the influence that bilingualism had in influencing Saskatchewan's multiculturalism policy. Multiculturalism in Saskatchewan was a reaction against Ottawa's increasing presence in cultural policy. Saskatchewan's motto, *Multis E Gentibus Vires* ("From Many Peoples Strength") has been touted since its adoption in the 1980s as recognition of the province's proud multicultural foundations and heritage.⁷⁹ Yet, as Saskatchewan historian Bill Waiser points out, this view of provincial (and regional) multiculturalism glosses over the Britishness of the province's founding era:

...the North-West Territories were to be the future home of countless millions of Anglo-Canadian farmers, a land where the best features of British civilization would take root and flourish...Western Canada was to be a kind of agricultural wonderland based on one dominant culture (Anglo-Canadian), engaged in one dominant activity (wheat farming) in one dominant region (the southern Prairies)...Saskatchewan was to be a bastion of British values and traditions [which] was the dominant theme at the Saskatchewan inauguration ceremonies.⁸⁰

In establishing multiculturalism policy, the Saskatchewan government argued that the West was settled by many different groups with an array of cultures, religions, and languages. Why should francophones receive special rights when there are so many other founding groups and minority traditions? For the francophones, this argument missed the mark for a number of reasons. The first is historical: the francophones believed that, owing to the fur trade era, they were the first Europeans in the West. Secondly, francophone political aspirations were not only based on history, but on contemporary redress for historical wrongs. The multicultural definition of Saskatchewan, the francophones argued, strategically picked its examples from history, overlooking the nationalism and British-centric identity of the province's political founders. Unfortunately for the Fransaskois, multiculturalism was not only a popular policy, it was also

⁷⁹ Waiser, "The Myth of Multiculturalism in Early Saskatchewan," in Gene M. Porter (ed.), *Perspectives of Saskatchewan* (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2009), 57-73.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 58-61.

useful to the provincial government in limiting federal government demands for bilingualism in the name of national unity. Bilingualism for national unity met its match with Saskatchewan multiculturalism.

Chapter five analyses the *Mercure* case, an eight-year-long battle (1980 to 1988) between the Fransaskois community and the Saskatchewan provincial government over the constitutional status of French in the province. Father André Mercure refused to pay an English-only speeding ticket and demanded a trial in French. While the case itself was decided by the Courts on judicial minutiae, *Mercure* was important because it provided an opportunity for the Fransaskois to have their own historical memory recognized within the province's highest institutions: the legislature and the courts. The case represents a pivotal moment in Saskatchewan's language regime because the Quebec referendum of 1980 and the Meech Lake accord (1987 to 1990) created opportunities for the Fransaskois to challenge the unilingual character of Saskatchewan political institutions. The stability and continuity of Saskatchewan's language regime was confirmed in 1988 when the Supreme Court ruled that the province could decide the question for itself. Saskatchewan opted for English only, with limited opportunities for bilingualism.

Ideas and beliefs in any political community develop over years, decades, even centuries. In the case of Saskatchewan, understandings of the province as multicultural, bilingual, or unilingual are products of a long process. Major political debates and subsequent government action between 1870 and 1931 created a British province. Between 1968 and 1990, Saskatchewan created a new identity for itself, one better suited to the times. But during both eras the place of French and francophones within the provincial identity was problematic.

CHAPTER ONE

Roots of Conflict: Founding a Western Canadian Political Tradition, 1870-1905

...on many occasions when it was thought the fire was out a small spark still remained, working gradually and surely under the surface and when fanned by a slight breeze breaks out again and creates a conflagration greater than the original one. What I want to see done in the present instance is some measure taken by this House which will extinguish this spark forever.

- Edgar Dewdney¹

What I want is that the future rules of the Northwest may be put in such a position that when passions are aroused and prejudices fomented by such men as we have in this House, by such newspapers as we have in this country, these future rulers of the Northwest will be in a position to say -- when passion is too strong or when they are not strong enough to oppose it -- 'What is the use? there is a law protecting the minority'.

- Henri Bourassa²

Introduction

The West was not turning out the way it was intended to. On July 15 1870, Manitoba and the North-West Territories entered into Confederation under difficult circumstances. Louis Riel and the Métis had forced Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's hand, gained recognition of their existing rights, and achieved provincial status for Manitoba. Among these rights was equal status for the English and French languages before the new province's legislature and courts.³ This chapter examines the Red River Resistance (1870), the *North-West Territories Act* (1875), early politics in the North-West Territories (1885-1892) and the Autonomy Bills controversy (1905). At each of these moments, proponents of French-English dualism threatened the British-centric blueprint for western Canada. British Canadian political leaders, wishing to break free of the controversies that dogged central Canada, did what they could to ensure the ascendancy of the English language and British political values. British Canadian victories established a political

¹ "Speech on the Dual Language," reported in the *Regina Leader*, March 11 1890. The speech was given in the House of Commons on February 20, 1890. Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 20 February 1890, 936.

² Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 28 March 1905, 3272.

³ *Manitoba Act, 1870*, 33 Victoria, c. 3 (Canada), s. 23.

culture hostile to dualism⁴ and the French language in western Canada. Language politics quickly became one of the most important issues during the formative years of western Canada's political institutions. Far from ending the divisive politics which plagued central Canada since its earliest days, language politics in Manitoba and the North-West Territories laid bare the bitterness that existed between the various strains of nationalism and identity in Canada.⁵

The Red River Resistance and the *Manitoba Act, 1870*

Ontarian loyalist frustration and thirst for revenge were palpable in Parliament as members debated the Manitoba bill. In the House of Commons, opposition members railed against the government's so-called compromise with "rebels" who had "humiliated" Parliament and the country.⁶ Alexander Mackenzie, a prominent member of the opposition who later became Prime Minister in 1873, gave a commentary that is illustrative of the debate's tone:

He opposed the Bill which had been introduced by the Government, because it was evidently conceived wholly in the interests of the dissatisfied portion of the people, and wholly with a view to secure the pacification of those who, without any just cause, raised the rebellion, and committed the most heinous crimes known to the law, (hear).⁷

Ebenezer Bodwell, Liberal opposition member for South Oxford, Ontario, was scathing in his criticism of the bill:

⁴ In chapters one and two, "dualism" refers to the "Dual Language" question, e.g., the place of French in Saskatchewan between 1870 and 1931. The terminology later changes to bilingualism between 1968 and 1990, although during both periods the two terms refer to the place of French as a public language in the province.

⁵ A sure sign that the Red River troubles had not been settled was the government's stubborn refusal to grant a written declaration of amnesty to Louis Riel and the Red River resisters. Macdonald preferred to wait until after the upcoming federal election. See Richard Gwyn, *Nation Maker. Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times*, vol II (Toronto, Vintage Canada, 2012), 146.

⁶ Governor-General John Young noted in his address to the House that "...the question should be considered with moderation, but the issues were too important if the future of the Dominion was so deeply involved, that it would be criminal to remain silent. He was not astonished at the feeling in Ontario, for the people had only felt that the country had been humiliated by the insurrection, and that a loyal Canadian had been murdered, but that the future of the magnificent North-West Territories was trembling in the balance." Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 5 May 1870, 1385-6.

⁷ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 11 May 1870, 1516.

...it seemed as if the Government desired to place the new Province under the control of the French Canadians. If that was not their object it looked like it, for it granted special privileges to that race, such as setting aside 1,400,000 acres of land for the half-breeds and their children. [Bodwell] denounced such a policy as one calculated to create a division among the people of the Dominion. He had been pained during the discussion on that Bill to hear members of the Government speak in terms of contempt of those who had proved themselves loyal to Canada in the Red River country, while those who had rebelled against them, and murdered and imprisoned their countrymen, were treated with the utmost respect and consideration. Such a course was humiliating to the House, and discouraging to those brave man [sic] who were ready to sacrifice their property, and if necessary their lives, in support of their connection with Canada.⁸

In Macdonald's absence from Parliament⁹, George-Étienne Cartier defended the government's track record, arguing that its intentions were to "adopt a most liberal policy with respect to the settlement of the territory."¹⁰ Some French Canadians held less flattering interpretations of the government's handling of the Resistance. In the Senate, Luc Letellier de St-Just expressed his suspicion of negotiating with the Red River delegates while, on the other hand, sending a "menace in the shape of an expedition."¹¹ What purpose lay in sending a military detachment to Red River if not to intimidate those who had demanded respect for their rights?¹²

For proponents of expansionism who held a certain blueprint for the political community of the new West, a great deal was at stake. Federal political leaders recognized that the debate on the Manitoba bill was a crucial moment in determining the future of the region's political institutions. What would be the dominant ethos and culture of the new province and region? The

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1435-6. Bodwell appears to have confounded the Métis land grants, which were intended for all Métis, not only those who spoke French, with other sections of the bill guaranteeing certain rights to the use of French in provincial institutions.

⁹ Macdonald fell ill with gallstones in May 1870.

¹⁰ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 9 May 1870, 1446.

¹¹ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, First Parliament, 4 March 1870, 228-229.

¹² In Quebec, the Resistance was at first seen as a movement for local autonomy rather than a linguistic/religious issue, and garnered little support amongst French Canadians. However, as the latter became convinced that Protestant Ontarians wished to punish the French Catholic Métis, the French Canadians moved towards a more sympathetic position. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation*, 77-81.

future of the young nation hung in the balance. Would Canada be united in language, religion, and creed or would it be sundered by divisive forces?¹³

British Canadian political leaders remained optimistic, however, since Manitoba represented the first concrete political realization of the dream of a British North-West. They were pleased that provincial institutions would be British in design. More importantly, the federal government would retain control of public lands in order to provide for settlement. Potential for mass settlement meant that the expansionist ideal, which stretched back over two decades to the Palliser and Hind expeditions of 1857 to 1860, was one step closer to realisation.¹⁴ Expansionists, who could be found in most British Canadian political circles, viewed the West as a fertile agricultural frontier which would be the foundation for a British Canadian empire. The region was to be a hinterland for British Canada, populated by people of British origin and characterized by British civic values.

At first, expansionists perceived the Métis and their French-Canadian supporters as potential allies in their cause due to their opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company's administration of the region. They were soon viewed as one of the movement's principal enemies, however, because of their participation in the Red River Resistance.¹⁵ Expansionists and British Canadian nationalists were convinced that the French-speaking Métis and French Canadians should have no part in settling the new region. In his study of British-Canadian

¹³ A genealogical understanding of the nation-state was gaining in popularity in the western world, and Canada was no exception. For example, Oxford's Regius History Professor E.A. Freeman, in *Comparative Politics: Six Lectures Read Before the Royal Institution in January and February*, 1873, expounded upon the argument of "one language, one nation" as essential to the emergence of modern political institutions. These ideas were formative for Canada's own D'Alton McCarthy, who quoted them at length during debates on French as an official language in the North-West Territories. Of course, the French Canadian presence in Canada caused major difficulties for those who adhered to this way of thinking. See Martel and Pâquet, *Speaking Up*, 46-47.

¹⁴ Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 79-100.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

nationalism between 1867 and 1914, historian Carl Berger explained the British Canadian nationalist outlook in 1870:

The issue at stake at Red River was no less monumental than the conflict of free soil versus slavery, for it also hinged on the question of what institutions were to be permanently stamped upon the garden of the west...Since the French Canadian lacked the dynamic impulse which made for material progress, his presence in the west would only stultify its development until 'the swift extension of American settlement and the intrusive fingers of American ambition' grasped it from Canada...French-Canadian claims were not only incompatible with the rapid settlement of the west; they were also irreconcilable with the requirements of the Canadian national sentiment which the Canadian Firsters espoused.¹⁶

These views on the "national character" of the Métis and French Canadians were not new at the time¹⁷, nor did they deviate from more general tendencies in Victorian thought which emphasized a hierarchy of the national character of various "races."¹⁸ Nations were composed of races, and the strongest nations were unified in language, creed, and religion. The latter was especially important for British Canadian nationalists, since they viewed Catholicism, the faith of most French Canadians and many Métis, with deep suspicion. They believed that the Catholic church stultified the material progress of states and played a key role in stoking Métis resistance to the westward expansion of Canada.¹⁹ Moreover, Catholic secret societies and Papal loyalty were viewed by militant Protestants as proof that they could never rest in safety, for the possibility of Catholic repression was always near. As long as a significant proportion of the population in western Canada remained Roman Catholic and continued to exercise considerable

¹⁶ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1970), 57-59.

¹⁷ Probably the most famous historical document on the national character of French Canadians (and still today the most hated by Canadian francophones) is Lord Durham's *Report on the Affairs of British North America*, first published in the British Parliamentary Papers in 1839 following the 1837-38 rebellions in Lower Canada.

¹⁸ See for example Georgios Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French* (New York, Palgrave, 2002), 2-9.

¹⁹ J.R. Miller, "Anti-Catholic Thought in Victorian Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 66, no. 4 (1985), 474-494.

political influence in the region and at Ottawa, the great national project of expansion was endangered.²⁰

Tensions over the future of western Canada were rooted in competing visions of the region, the Canadian state, political ideology, and religion. But for some proponents of a united British Canada, religion was not the only important factor, nor was it the most urgent. As University of Saskatchewan historian J.R. Miller notes, the language question in the latter nineteenth century cannot be reduced solely to religion:

As time passed, however, it became increasingly the case that Canadian Protestants reacted to indigenous stimuli, and not necessarily always to strictly religious ones...Protestant critics concerned themselves more with problems that Catholics were perceived to be creating at home...from the 1870s onward the preoccupation was more with the Catholic church in Quebec and its role in preserving and, it was feared, extending the French-Canadian presence within Confederation.²¹

The Resistance was therefore, in the eyes of British Ontarian nationalists, not only a clash of religions but of civilizations.²² Religion divided the country, but not as much as race and language. The French-speaking and Catholic Métis, and to some extent their French Canadian political supporters, were seen as products of a different time, of a past that needed to be left behind in order to fulfil a new British Canadian destiny. It was up to British Canadians who could wield their power as a majority in order to create a new region that left behind the old divisions that plagued an older Canada.²³

²⁰ See P.B. Waite's brief discussion of militant Protestant thought in *Canada 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 209-210.

²¹ Miller, "Anti-Catholic Thought in Victorian Canada," 477. See also Paul Crunican, *Priests and Politicians: Manitoba Schools and the Election of 1896* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1974), 4-5.

²² Even George F.G. Stanley's classic work, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1936), viewed the Resistance in this light. For Stanley, the events of 1869-70 and 1885 were the result of two incompatible ways of life -- one Aboriginal, another European, the former tragically attempting to resist the onslaught of the latter.

²³ Martel Pâquet put it, "...the new political culture conveyed the values of the conquering bourgeoisie, characterized by state activism in language-planning policies...the issue symbolized the tension between the state's decision to

Why, then, did French language rights pass into the constitution of the first western Canadian province despite the growing importance of British Canadian nationalism and expansionism as a political force by 1870?²⁴ One factor is expediency. Macdonald and the federal government had little choice but to acquiesce to some of the local population's demands. The Prime Minister was seriously ill and his political future was uncertain. Canada had no real military force to speak of. No police force yet existed for the purpose of keeping order in the region.²⁵ Without significant hard power to rein in Riel, an immediate political compromise was necessary. In any case, from the government's perspective, the important matter was to ensure that the North-West did not fall into American hands. The true character of the region's political institutions could be dealt with later. Manitoba could enter into Canada as bilingual since the government's main goal was to assert sovereignty over the region.²⁶

The Manitoba language provisions can also be explained by dynamics in central Canadian politics. In Ontario, the expansionist movement's influence ensured a certain urgency on the part of Ottawa in opening the West. While extending dualism and separate schools to Manitoba could be controversial in Protestant Ontario, the federal government could easily justify both moves by underlining the importance of asserting Canadian sovereignty in the area which overrode other considerations. At first Quebec paid little attention to the Resistance and viewed the Métis as uncivilized, but French Canadians in that province quickly adopted a pro-

homogenize the population within a given territory and the citizens' *will to live collectively* and participate in the political community through the exercise of rights and liberties...." *Speaking Up*, 45-46.

²⁴ Section 23 of the *Manitoba Act, 1870* provided for the official use of both English and French in the legislature, courts, and legislative documents.

²⁵ The creation of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) was actually delayed because of the Red River Resistance. In 1870, Macdonald saw no immediate need to create the force since Canada now had a militia presence in the North-West. See S.W. Horrall, "Sir John A. Macdonald and the Mounted Police Force for the Northwest Territories," *Canadian Historical Review* 53, no. 2 (1972), 179-200.

²⁶ As Lewis H. Thomas bluntly put it, "Expediency rather than political conviction produced the Manitoba Act." *The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories, 1870-1897*, 43. When Macdonald introduced the legislation, he remarked that "All these clauses and stipulations are, of course, subject to alterations by the people themselves...they may alter their Constitutions as they please." Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 2 May 1870, 1301.

Métis outlook to counteract British Protestant fervour and anti-Métis sentiment.²⁷ By the time the *Manitoba Act* was proclaimed, the French Canadians perceived the Métis cause as a religious and linguistic question that echoed some of their own struggles. Quebec therefore understood the adoption of the *Manitoba Act*, with its guarantees for the French language and Catholic schools, as a political victory for their vision of Confederation. Like Quebec, Manitoba now had institutions which protected the rights and interests of French-speaking Catholics.²⁸

The Red River resistance and creation of Manitoba, however, initiated a new political tradition in the region: conflict over language and the place of French. As Manitoba historian W.L. Morton argues,

The Manitoba Act of 1870 was a victory for the duality of Red River, but it was a defensive victory. It was a means to buttress the French element in Red River. Moreover, it was a rearguard action fought to gain time until the French element might be strengthened after the transfers by aid from Quebec, and so perhaps itself in the Northwest. The Act would prevent the immediate overrunning of the *métis* by English land-seekers and the consequent establishment of a western Ontario which might not think it desirable to protect a minority language or to preserve a system of denominational schools...To most the Act was viewed, it would seem, as a necessary concession to the French of Red River, perhaps as a good-natured gesture to the French of Quebec. But Ontario could have no doubt whose emigrants would dominate the Northwest. The English therefore bowed to political expediency, and waited for the actual pioneers to make the final decision. That is, they did not accept duality as a principle, but waited for the actual circumstances to change.²⁹

Even if it was conceded in 1870, dualism in Manitoba did not fit with Sir John A. Macdonald's plan for the region's political institutions. It represented an unacceptable principle. Expansionists in Ontario believed that French had no place in the North-West. As historian P.B. Waite put it,

²⁷ A.I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation*, 83-84. Silver's interpretation is consistent with other works which have underlined how French Canadians felt threatened by British Canadian nationalistic thought: "With its announced objective of consolidating the Anglo-Saxon race and its appeal to the English-Canadian heritage, it is hardly surprising that imperialism appeared alien and threatening to French Canadians." Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 134.

²⁸ Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation*, 83-84. Ironically, as Silver points out, Quebec newspapers actually paid little attention to the details of the *Manitoba Act* itself; none of them even bothered to look closely at the language provisions in the new law.

²⁹ Morton, "The West and the Nation, 1870-1970," 13-14.

by 1880 Ontario was prepared to remake the West in its own image, one very different from the one imagined by Riel in 1870.³⁰ The Manitoba case was instructive to British Canadian nationalists because it demonstrated the dangers inherent in the nascent political West. The ascendancy of a British political community and the English language could not be taken for granted. Thus, by 1880, Manitoba's new English-speaking and Protestant majority set about paring back French as an official language and French-language schools.³¹ In the Territories, French speakers were roughly equal in demographic weight to English speakers³², but the direction in which regional and national politics were heading did not bode well for French language rights there either. French Canadian migration to the West was anemic.³³

The North-West Territories Act Amendments and the Rise of Territorial Democracy (1877-1888)

In the North-West Territories, a vastly dispersed population, squabbling political leadership within the Catholic Clergy, and the spectre of incoming British Canadian settlers spelled trouble for the future. Manitoban politics trended towards the complete elimination of French as an official language, and little could be done by French speaking political leaders. The

³⁰ Waite, *Canada 1874-1896*, 10.

³¹ See for example Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français* II; Gerald Friesen, "Homeland to Hinterland: Political Transition in Manitoba, 1870 to 1879," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* 14, no. 1 (1979), 33-47; R.O. Macfarlane, "Manitoba Politics and Parties after Confederation," *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association* 19, no. 1 (1940), 45-55; Janice Staples, "Consociationalism at the Provincial Level: The Erosion of Dualism in Manitoba, 1870-1890," in Kenneth McRae (ed.), *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 288-299.

³² The 1880-1881 census lists 2, 896 Territorial inhabitants as "French Origin," while 1, 374 and 1, 217 individuals are listed as English and Scottish respectively. Canada, *Census of Canada 1880-81*, vol. I (Ottawa, Maclean, Roger & Co., 1882), 94-97 and 300-301.

³³ Silver, "French Canada and the Prairie Frontier, 1870-1890."

Métis-French Canadian political coalition collapsed following the latter's disinterest or inability to resolve the lands question and other issues that the French speaking Métis faced.³⁴

But there was some hope for francophones in the territories. As the language question simmered in Manitoba, Parliament considered revisions to the *North-West Territories Act* of 1875. Legislation had been delayed by opposition, led by Sir John A. Macdonald, to the government's choice of Fort Pelly as the Territories' first capital.³⁵ As David Mills argued when he tabled the new bill, the 1875 legislation had some considerable deficiencies, especially with regards to the Lieutenant Governor's powers³⁶; the goal of the 1877 legislation was to clarify them. It was routine business. No major objections were brought to the legislation during second and third reading in the House of Commons, and the bill was sent to the Senate for approval. Some members of the Upper Chamber, however, had different ideas on the contents of the new act. The strong proponent of French language rights and long time Manitoba politician Marc Girard argued during second reading that:

He would also call attention to the fact that the French language seemed to have been totally ignored in the bill, although the majority of the people of the territories were French, and they had as much right to have their language acknowledged there as they had in Quebec and Manitoba by having a translation of all the ordinances passed for their guidance.³⁷

Ten days later during third reading, Girard proposed an amendment to the bill that would allow either French or English to be used in the Territorial Council debates, publishing of Council proceedings and journals, and before the territorial courts.³⁸ The government was annoyed at the amendment but reacted with indifference. David Mills was the only member to offer a comment

³⁴ Friesen, "Homeland to Hinterland."

³⁵ Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories, 1870-1897*, 73. See also Macdonald's intervention during debates on Territorial legislation in Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 12 March 1875, 655.

³⁶ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 14 March 1877, 685.

³⁷ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, 9 April 1877, 318-319.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 April 1877, 436.

on the amendment, arguing that "Almost every one in that part of the country spoke Cree...and if the proceedings were to be published in the most prevalent language, Cree should be chosen for the purpose."³⁹ The measure passed without opposition.

Dualism did not last long in the territories before it began to garner controversy. The arrival of the railway brought in waves of new settlers, fed the establishment of the first major urban centres on the Prairies⁴⁰, and triggered an economic boom in the first half of the 1880s. These were times of important economic and social change in the region. The bulk of the population emigrating to the Territories was British-Ontarian in origin, and the political community reflected this reality. Every major newspaper established during the 1880s was printed in English. "Progress," as the *Saskatchewan Herald* trumpeted in one of its earliest editorials, meant giving increased administrative and political importance to the new British-Ontarian settlers rather than the existing and Indian populations in the Territories.⁴¹ As Gerald Friesen argues, this idea of progress emphasized the building of a new society in an "empty" land:

With a clean slate to receive their designs, and the comforting doctrine of progress to maintain their optimism, westerners set out to establish a uniform society upon not one but several paths. They ignored the ideal of a natural spontaneous world, but instead welcomed their heritage of law, religion, and government; Mounted Police, Protestant churches, legislative assemblies, and national schools soon garrisoned their outpost of civilization...Whatever their hopes, these men understood that the West was leading Canada toward a new and greater nationality.⁴²

³⁹ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 27 April 1877, 1872.

⁴⁰ Paul Voisey, "The Urbanization of the Canadian Prairies, 1871-1816," in R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (eds.), *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1985), 383-407.

⁴¹ "The Administration of the North-West," *Saskatchewan Herald*, February 23 1880.

⁴² Friesen, "The Western Canadian Identity," 15.

This conception of the region included keeping languages other than English out. As historian P.F.W. Rutherford explains in his analysis of western Canadian newspapers between 1870 and 1896,

Most important, they asserted that the language, culture, and ethos of the west must be English. The west was destined to become 'a modern, democratic, Anglo-Saxon community'. Even more than Ontario, the west seemed committed to the ideal of a thoroughly English Canada. Thus the francophone minority constituted the major threat to their community.⁴³

Most threatening were francophone political leaders such as Joseph Royal or Archbishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché, both prominent defenders of the francophone community in Manitoba and well connected to both the Catholic church and the Quebec political community. The press portrayed them, and other francophone leaders as "interlopers without any stake in the community."⁴⁴

Weak francophone settlement from Québec, as well as Anglo-Canadian frustration with the lack of representative government following the 1885 Rebellion, contributed to a movement against French and dualism in the region. English-speaking political circles in the West conflated Riel with the more general cause of the French language in the region, even if many francophones did not support Riel. Sympathy for Riel in Québec led to an increased suspicion among Anglo-Canadians of francophones in the Territories. English-language newspapers in the region did not take kindly to Quebec's defense of Riel and the Rebellion. The *Saskatchewan Herald* declared that the francophones were already receiving special treatment that they did not deserve:

Speaking for the North-West especially, we say that the liberality of the majority has conceded to the French element rights and privileges not accorded to any other race; their prejudices have been consulted to the detriment of the majority; and they have been favored in many ways in a manner to which their numbers

⁴³ Rutherford, "The Western Press and Regionalism, 1870-1896," *Canadian Historical Review* LII (1971), 293.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 294.

give no claim. If, however, they demand absolute control of all the affairs of the country as a peace-offering for what they consider a national insult in the hanging of Riel, it will certainly lead to a revision of this state of affairs, and they will be forced to take their place in confederation on an equal footing with the other Provinces.⁴⁵

The francophones would simply have to accept whatever form of dualism the majority determined for them. John A. Macdonald took a similar view, arguing to Minister of Justice Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau that dualism was a thing of the past in the region, and for francophones, "as to their rights, they have been more than recognized."⁴⁶ The Territorial press wrote that while the French Canadians were not to blame for the Rebellion, French-Canadian sympathy for Riel meant that they could not be trusted in the region.⁴⁷ Their loyalty to the North-West and its development remained open questions.

One such example of this sentiment was the wave of protest that followed the appointment of Joseph Royal as the new Territorial Lieutenant Governor.⁴⁸ For Territorial opinion leaders, there were few illusions as to why Royal was chosen. As the *Edmonton Bulletin* put it, "Mr. Royal's claim to the lieutenant governorship lies in the fact that he is of French race, while the chief opposition that he will encounter will probably be on the same account."⁴⁹ By putting a French Canadian in the highest office of the Territories, Macdonald was likely hoping to settle down the political storm in Quebec following Riel's hanging. Macdonald could also assure his allies in Quebec that French-Canadian rights would be protected by a lieutenant governor chosen from among their people.⁵⁰ The *Regina Leader* argued, however, that Royal or

⁴⁵ "An Unholy Alliance," *Saskatchewan Herald*, December 14 1885.

⁴⁶ Macdonald to Chapleau, June 6 1888. In Pope (ed.), *Correspondence of Sir John A. Macdonald*, 413-414.

⁴⁷ "Riel," *Regina Leader*, June 16 1885.

⁴⁸ D.J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, vol. I (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1981), 41-42.

⁴⁹ "A New Lieut.-Governor," *Edmonton Bulletin*, January 30 1886.

⁵⁰ In one letter Macdonald noted that "I have continual complaints down here that there are not enough of your compatriots selected for office in the North West." Macdonald to Royal, June 14 1888. [PAS], Sir John A. Macdonald Papers.

any other French Canadian would be a poor choice for the position since Royal's cultural background left him sympathetic to Riel's plight:

...we say it cannot be a matter of surprise if the excitement got up in Quebec about the execution of Riel, because he had a little French blood in his veins, has stirred up kindred sentiments in the bosoms of the people here in the North-West...Under those circumstances French Canadians need not be surprised if the rumor that we were to have a French Canadian Lieutenant governor has amongst an English Canadian population created some excitement. Perhaps it would have been received without a murmur had there been no such manifestations as have taken place in Quebec.⁵¹

Royal would be even more repugnant as lieutenant governor given that democracy had yet to arrive for the Territories. "To give the people of the North-West a ruler who would not be welcome to them," the *Leader* fumed, "would be an act of high-handed tyranny."⁵² The French-language question would eventually be caught up in the regional movement for representative democracy. The fact that Royal was a loyal Conservative and probably held little sympathy for Riel did not deter the territorial press from its objections, nor did it stop former lieutenant governor Edgar Dewdney from privately expressing his disgust about the appointment to John A. Macdonald.⁵³

The attacks on Joseph Royal expanded into attacks on francophones in the region. P.G. Laurie, editor of the *Saskatchewan Herald*, argued that French speakers in the territories had already been given too many rights that no other groups enjoyed, and that francophones should "not be carried away with the idea that they can over-ride all law and govern the country by resolutions and manifestoes emanating from the slums of eastern cities."⁵⁴ In the minds of political leaders, French had nothing to do with the blueprint of western Canada. Like their

⁵¹ "Future Governor of the Territories," *Regina Leader*, January 21 1886.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ "I shall be very sorry to see a Frenchman here and it will create a very bad feeling...if a Frenchman is to come here the sooner a Legislative Assembly is created the better and the Indian Office should be separated from the Lieutenant governor." Dewdney to Macdonald, April 11 1887, quoted in Lewis H. Thomas, *The Struggle For Responsible Government in the North-West Territories, 1870-1897*, 160.

⁵⁴ *Saskatchewan Herald*, 4 January 1886.

present political institutions, the French language had been imposed on them by Ottawa and Quebec, and lacked democratic legitimacy. Royal's presence at the head of the Territorial political machinery, in addition to the official status of French, were simply unacceptable to the type of society being constructed in the West. As the push for responsible government gained traction in the 1880s and 1890s, one of the core ideals for the movement was the elimination of French as an official language in the name of economy, but also in the name of democracy and self-determination.

"Democracy" arrived in the Territories in 1888, when the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories was established by federal statute in May. Elections were held at the end of June and the results yielded no francophone representation. Charles Borromée Rouleau, a judge who worked as a stipendiary magistrate in the North-West since 1883, sat as one of the Assembly's three "legal experts" but had no voting power.⁵⁵ As lieutenant governor, Joseph Royal was well-positioned to defend the status of French because the newly-elected Territorial Assembly had little real powers at its disposal. Aside from a small advisory council composed of a few elected members of the assembly, all executive authority remained with the lieutenant governor with the exception of some financial matters.⁵⁶ Moreover, as long as the status of French remained under federal jurisdiction rather than local legislation, the new assembly could not modify it. Royal was therefore a popular choice for the local francophone population, although some francophone leaders worried that his appointment would cause a backlash against French.⁵⁷ Macdonald advised Royal not to keep another prominent francophone, Amédée Forget, as Clerk of the new Assembly. Two francophones in high executive and administrative positions

⁵⁵ "Members Elected to First Assembly," in *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories*, First Session, First Legislature (Regina, R.B. Gordon, 1889), 6.

⁵⁶ Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories*, 163.

⁵⁷ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 42.

could arouse suspicions.⁵⁸ Forget was appointed as assistant Indian Commissioner instead, but was also retained by Royal in order to revise and consolidate the Territorial Ordinances.

The expansion of local government powers in the Territories did little to quell nationalistic sentiment among British Canadians in the region. They expected to use their new legislative powers to confirm the true character of the region's political community. As the first session approached, several newspapers attacked separate schools, particularly their instructional use of French.⁵⁹ Shortly after the elections in June and Royal's swearing in to office in July, the *Qu'Appelle Vidette* urged legislators to foster unity by adopting "one nation, one language" as the Territorial motto and by abolishing the official use of French in schools and legislative institutions.⁶⁰ The *Regina Journal* bluntly argued for a complete end to the use of French and Catholic schools.⁶¹

Territorial Democracy and the French Language (1888 to 1890)

The first session of the first Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories opened on 31 October 1888 with Royal reading the Speech from the Throne in both English and French.⁶² Members gave little attention to this show of dualism, instead turning their attention towards the use of French in schools as they updated the *School Ordinance*. They made it mandatory for at least one primary course to be taught in English. Trustees were no longer allowed to choose curriculum, making it difficult to encourage the teaching of French.⁶³ Two more changes to the ordinance were proposed but dropped due to Royal's insistence: that

⁵⁸ Macdonald viewed Forget as a "stirrer up of strife ever since the execution of Riel" and a "mischief maker." Macdonald to Royal, June 14 1888. [PAS], Sir John A. Macdonald Papers.

⁵⁹ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 42.

⁶⁰ "One Language, One People," *Qu'Appelle Vidette*, 19 July 1888, quoted in Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 42.

⁶¹ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 46.

⁶² "Legislative Assembly. The Opening," *Regina Leader*, November 6 1888.

⁶³ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 45.

religious instruction be outright prohibited in the Territories, and second, that the Board of Education be replaced by a minister from the Assembly.⁶⁴ While neither of these amendments specifically attacked the French language, the first would have irreparably damaged the Franco-Catholic clergy's ability to keep a francophone character in Catholic education, while the second would have granted even greater power in educational administration to an entirely Anglo-Protestant and hostile Assembly. At the end of the session in December, Royal and other French Canadian leaders worried about what lay ahead given the intellectual and political climate.

In 1890 the Manitoba government passed legislation to abolish French and separate schools. The Territorial press was pleased. "It is fitting," the *Prince Albert Times* read, "that a progressive western Province like Manitoba, whose population is now being acquired, should set the example by declaring that as for us we are determined to be one people, with one language and one school..."⁶⁵ It was also a fundamental question for national, but also Territorial political leaders. As political scientist Edmund Aunger argues, "the North-West language question touched on such fundamental issues of Canadian nationhood that it provoked a bitter national crisis, and the original territorial concerns were quickly overshadowed."⁶⁶

In a 1890 speaking tour in the West, Member of Parliament and ardent anti-francophone nationalist D'Alton McCarthy did his best to stir up trouble in the region. His ideas were popular in the North-West Territories. Royal wrote to Macdonald that, following McCarthy's efforts, he would "not be surprised if the members [of the Assembly] do memorialize the Dom. Parliament to do away with the printing in french of public documents. The wave has reached here."⁶⁷ The

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ "Dual Language and Separate Schools in Manitoba," *Prince Albert Times*, August 23 1889.

⁶⁶ "Justifying the End of Official Bilingualism: Canada's North-West Assembly and the Dual Language Question, 1889-1892," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 3 (2001), 455. See also Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 53.

⁶⁷ Royal to Macdonald, August 22 1889. [PAS], Sir John A. Macdonald Papers.

Territorial newspapers certainly wanted action on the question. They called on the assembly to use Manitoba as a model for progressively eliminating Catholic schools and dualism, while others such as the *Regina Journal* attacked separate schools as hindering the further national development of the region. National unity, the papers argued, ought to be the priority in the education system. One system of schools was required in order to foster one unified national identity. French language teaching, on the contrary, was divisive and endangered national unity.⁶⁸

Fearing the worst, francophone political leaders outlined their main priorities. Joseph Royal, like the Catholic clergy, put more importance on the protection of Catholicism and the French language in separate schools than he did in public institutions such as the assembly.⁶⁹ Before the opening of the second session in October 1889, for example, he told Macdonald that printing documents in French, "in so far as all the public documents are concerned, is in most cases a useless expenditure of public money."⁷⁰ Royal believed it would be more useful to have a select number of ordinances printed in French, such as the *School Ordinance*, so as to keep costs at a reasonable level. But Royal knew where the politics of the Territories were headed. He lamented to Macdonald that

Before immigration commenced to set in, the proportion of the french speaking population in the N.W.T. was very large; as a matter of fact they were the majority. This condition has been, seemingly, materially changed of late, as evidenced by the fact that our present Legislature, although composed of 22 members elected by the people, does not contain one single french speaking representative. It is true I have heard loud complaints against the manner in which some districts had been formed, the assertion being that - amongst others - the districts of Edmonton and Prince Albert have been so arranged as to leave but a

⁶⁸ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 46 and 49.

⁶⁹ This aspect of Royal's political thought is consistent with his work as a journalist in Quebec before he arrived in the North-West. Royal wrote for *La Minerve*, Sir George-Étienne Cartier's newspaper; he also founded *L'Ordre*, a paper dedicated to ultramontane ideals and the application of Catholic values to public affairs. A.I. Silver, "ROYAL, JOSEPH," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. XIII (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1994). See also Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 53.

⁷⁰ Royal to Macdonald, October 6 1889. [PAS], Sir John A. Macdonald Papers.

very faint chance to the french speaking electors of being able to elect one of them to the Legislature [sic].⁷¹

Royal opened the second session on 16 October 1889, this time reading the Speech from the Throne in English only, probably in anticipation of the wave of anti-French politics that would follow.⁷² The decision would return to haunt him later when the status of French was debated in the Assembly. Members took the French language question seriously, making it one of their first priorities. A resolution was adopted at the session's opening to petition the House of Commons, the Senate, and the governor general to repeal section 110 of the *North-West Territories Act*, "owing to the unanimous opinion of the House on this question."⁷³ Apparently, there was also "no doubt as to the feeling of the country on the question."⁷⁴ Frederick Haultain, James Clinkskill, and James Neff, all able political leaders who were vocal about their opposition to dualism, were given responsibility of drafting the resolution.⁷⁵

Separate schools were next to come under attack on October 24, when the Legislature moved that a second address be presented to the governor general, the Senate, and the House of Commons, this time demanding that the provision respecting separate schools be repealed from the *North-West Territories Act*.⁷⁶ Ontario-born B.P. Richardson, member for Wolsely, authored the motion. He argued that repeal of separate schools in the territories was necessary because the region had changed fundamentally, and it was time to settle the permanent character and

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² According to Manoly Lupul, this was the justification Royal gave to Grandin, so as to not "wave a red flag in front of a bull." Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 56. See also "Legislative Assembly. Second Session. October 16," *Regina Leader*, October 22 1889. Some newspapers in Quebec attacked Royal and claimed that he only read the Speech in English on direction from Ottawa; however, there is no proof that Macdonald ever directed Royal to take such a course of action. See "Le Monde and Governor Royal," *Regina Leader*, November 8 1889.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Journals of the First Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories*, Second Session, First Legislature (Regina, R.B. Gordon, 1890), 17-18.

⁷⁶ "Legislative Assembly," *Regina Leader*, October 29 1889.

constitution of the land.⁷⁷ R.G. Brett -- another Ontarian immigrant, physician, educator, and proponent of politics "by the people"⁷⁸ -- argued that the Catholic minority would simply have to trust the majority not to abuse its power, and that a unified education system was important because it "was the corner stone of our future prosperity and it should be laid properly."⁷⁹ It was time to solidify the new political community in the Territories by taking decisive, permanent action on these important questions. Perpetuating an education system that had no place in the territories would be bad for progress and hamper future development of the region.

On 28 October Hugh Cayley, a political Conservative who believed "in high license, local responsible government for the Territories,"⁸⁰ presented the special committee's resolution on the dual language to the Assembly. The wording was simple and requested that dualism be repealed by the federal government because the vast majority of the public was already opposed to it, and "the needs of the Territories do not demand the official recognition of a dual language in the North-West, or the expenditure necessitated by the same."⁸¹ During the debate on the resolution, Cayley asked that members try to keep their personal feelings out of the discussion. Judge Rouleau, however, felt obliged to defend dualism, arguing that the French Canadians were as loyal as any other Canadian and should not be punished for speaking a different language from the majority. Moreover, Rouleau claimed that the French had special rights. They could not be placed in the same class as other immigrants to the North-West. They were equal partners, owing to their long history as Canadians.⁸²

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ "Our Legislators. Brief Sketches of North-West M.L.A's.," *Regina Leader*, December 1 1891.

⁷⁹ "Legislative Assembly," *Regina Leader*, October 29 1889.

⁸⁰ "Our Legislators. Brief Sketches of North-West M.L.A's.," *Regina Leader*, December 1 1891.

⁸¹ "Legislative Assembly. Discussion of the Dual Language," *Regina Leader*, November 1 1889.

⁸² *Ibid.*

Frederick Haultain's defense of the resolution demonstrated the deep intellectual and political commitment to eliminating French as an official language. For Haultain and his supporters, the dual language provisions of the 1877 *North-West Territories Act* had been imposed on the territories by Parliament, and lacked local democratic legitimacy. It was a question of democracy and equality with other Canadians. The goal of the assembly, Haultain argued, was to gain "the power to deal with the question themselves, without any restrictive clauses."⁸³ Dualism was doubly offensive to Haultain and other proponents of responsible government, since it was not only imposed by the federal government, but was also paid for out of the territorial budget, over which the Assembly exerted a limited amount of control. Furthermore, the lieutenant governor was a French Canadian who refused to relinquish executive control over finances and expenditures at a time when the assembly was increasingly frustrated about its lack of constitutional powers. In the same vein, farmer and Member for Moosomin James Neff explained that dualism had no legitimacy in the North-West since "...when section 110 was put into the Act the North-West had no representation at Ottawa. There was no such idea as the taking away their language from anybody, but to have the dual language forced upon them was what he objected to."⁸⁴ More moderate members such as Frank Oliver, who represented a considerable number of francophones in the Edmonton constituency⁸⁵ and later succeeded Clifford Sifton as Minister of the Interior in 1905, insisted that the language question was a local matter. The Assembly, Oliver explained, was the best place to decide how to deal with minority rights. Judge Rouleau was desperate to oppose the motion; in a last-ditch effort to bring it down, Rouleau moved that it be read six months later, but his motion was rejected and the resolution adopted.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ "Our Legislators. Brief Sketches of North-West M.L.A's.," *Regina Leader*, December 1 1891.

The language question was part of a larger attempt by Haultain and the assembly to wrest more powers out of Ottawa. On 29 October, Haultain and the other three members of the Advisory Council tendered their resignation to Royal, arguing that Council had failed in some aspects of administration, that the Council's actions did not have the approval of the Assembly, and that the powers granted to the council were "concessions" rather than "rights." Responsibility without right of financial control, Haultain wrote, was worthless.⁸⁶ Royal dug in. On the advice of Parliament, he ignored the Haultain group and nominated a new Advisory Council, creating a ministerial crisis and major power struggle between himself and the Assembly.⁸⁷ On 19 November, Haultain presented to the assembly a special committee report on the structure and nature of the Territorial government to be forwarded to Ottawa. The first resolution was the repeal of dualism in the Legislature. Territorial Assembly members firmly believed that they should be the principal authority on not only the language matter, but a number of others such as terms of the Assembly, enfranchisement, powers of the Advisory Council, and control over public property.⁸⁸

The Assembly's 1889 session made one thing clear: agitation for responsible government and constitutional reforms were synonymous with the elimination of dualism and separate schools. Questions viewed by the Assembly as essential to the cultural and political foundation of the region -- notably, one language and one school -- could not be solved except through greater local powers. As W.L. Morton argued, it was a matter of reversing the colonial status that

⁸⁶ "Resignation of the Adv. Bd. Legislative Assembly, Regina, N.W.T. 29 October 1889," John A. Macdonald Papers, Royal-Macdonald Correspondence. These papers are also published in *Journals of the First Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories*, Second Session, First Legislature, 141-143.

⁸⁷ Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories*, 171-173.

⁸⁸ in *Journals of the First Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories*, Second Session, First Legislature (Regina, R.B. Gordon, 1890), 107-109.

Ottawa had imposed on the region⁸⁹; part of that status was two official languages, which members saw as needlessly imposed on them by a distant government.

Other francophone leaders in the Territories decried the unfolding situation. At the end of the session, Monseigneur Vital-Justin Grandin, Bishop of St. Albert since 1871, sent a letter to the Archbishop of Quebec complaining of the difficulties that the francophone population faced at the hands of the Assembly. It was a tragic document. Grandin's discouragement and disbelief were palpable. "Are not these French Canadians and Half-breeds the men who made possible the settlement of the North-West," Grandin wrote, "who rendered more easy the intercourse between the white man and the Indian, and who are this day the connecting link between them?." ⁹⁰ Where was recognition and appreciation for the historical role of the French in helping to open up the region? Grandin deplored the "fanaticism" of the Assembly, but did not spare the Quebec clergy, lamenting their half-hearted attempts at sending French Canadians out West: "If even one-fourth of those who emigrated from your Province during the past ten years had come to us, we would still constitute the majority, or at all events be a powerful minority which would have to be taken to account and against which none would think of enacting extraordinary laws." ⁹¹

Haultain, Responsible Government, and the Status of French (1890 to 1892)

In January 1890 the House of Commons considered the petitions sent by the North-West Assembly on dualism and schools. Members of the Commons had relatively little to say about any of the proposed amendments to the *North-West Territories Act*, except for sections relating to language. D'Alton McCarthy moved to eliminate the offending language provisions from the

⁸⁹ W.L. Morton, "The Bias of Prairie Politics," 289-300.

⁹⁰ Grandin to Taschereau, November 20 1889, read out in Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 29 January 1890, 119-121.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

act. But despite knowing the volatility of dual language issues in the country, he opted not to choose his words carefully and railed against the 1877 amendment to the *North-West Territories Act*, arguing that "if a constitution were framed for a new country, it would never occur to any person to do so foolish a thing as to stipulate for two official languages."⁹² Moreover, the French language had been "imposed upon the Territories; of course without any consent of theirs...."⁹³ The rest of his speech was an assault on the history of the French language in Canada, ranging from the Treaty of Paris to Lord Durham's report up to the present day. It was, McCarthy maintained, a question of the deepest importance. Canada could never be united as long as more than one language continued to be spoken; moreover, the French Canadians were becoming increasingly ambitious, and eventually would have to be put in their place.⁹⁴

McCarthy's proposed amendment to the *North-West Territories Act* sparked a lively debate. French-Canadian members assailed McCarthy's vision of Canada and vowed to defend their countrymen in the North-West. Some English Canadian MPs sided with McCarthy in principle, but found his approach unacceptable and unnecessarily inflammatory. Members representing the Territories saw the question somewhat differently from their central Canadian colleagues. Prominent journalist and territorial politician Nicholas Flood Davin opposed McCarthy's attempt to have Parliament impose a solution on the region because "This is, Sir, after all, a North-West question."⁹⁵ To the eyes of a prairie politician like Davin, McCarthy and

⁹² *Ibid.*, 22 January 1890, 39.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 38. The Territorial francophone community, alarmed by the territorial assembly's resolution and McCarthy's motion, mobilized in order to have its voice heard and stop the attacks on French from having their desired effect. A wave of petitions, some organized by leaders of the Catholic clergy such as Archbishop Grandin, others by secular figures such as Judge Rouleau, sent to the Department of State and the Governor General of Canada. Grandin to Chapleau, 20 December 1889 and Vital to Chapleau, 23 December 1889, LAC RG 6, vol. 74, File 54. "To His Excellency Lord Stanley of Preston, Governor General of Canada in Council" 24 December 1889, LAC RG 2 Vol. 5182, File "1890 Dormants #223-254." This petition bears close to 100 signatures from the Calgary district. Rouleau sent in a number of petitions over the following weeks.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹⁵ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 12 February 1890, 532.

Ottawa were imposing change on a region seeking to build its own political community. To Davin, it appeared that McCarthy hardly even knew much about the Territories before he began his one language crusade:

I am not aware that he ever took a very great interest in our welfare until very lately. He himself tells us that he sat in this House time and again when this measure was before it, and that he actually did not know that the 110th clause existed until the spring of last year. Well, in an ordinary member that would be an extraordinary thing, but in a distinguished advocate it is a very marvellous thing indeed.⁹⁶

"This question", Davin continued, "is a local one, and for that reason I consider that it should be dealt with by the Local Legislature."⁹⁷ Local legislators had a better understanding of Territorial needs, and would know how to deal with dualism. McCarthy, on the other hand, had little patience for proponents of provincial rights and those who encroached on federal government jurisdiction; in his view the language question in the Territories ought to be settled in Parliament, the ultimate authority on the Territories and the nation.⁹⁸

Edgar Dewdney, another member with a great deal of experience in the North-West, also sought to introduce a more western Canadian perspective into the debate. "During the ten years I lived in the North-West Territories," Dewdney argued, "I never, on one single occasion that I recollect, heard any objection to the printing of the ordinances in French."⁹⁹ Dewdney believed that settlers to the region were attempting to leave behind central Canadian prejudices in favour of a new life in a new land. More importantly, however, he explained that members of the Territorial Assembly were likely causing a fuss over the French language because they needed

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 532.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 533.

⁹⁸ J.R. Miller, "'As a Politician He is a Great Enigma': The Social and Political Ideas of D'Alton McCarthy," *Canadian Historical Review* 58, no. 4 (December 1977), 404.

⁹⁹ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 20 February 1890, 933.

more money and flexibility of power in government."¹⁰⁰ Dewdney even admitted that he would have read the Speech from the Throne himself when he was Lieutenant Governor of the Territories but his abilities in French were insufficient for the duty and "my audience would not know whether I was speaking in Blackfoot, Cree, or French, and I thought it better to leave it alone."¹⁰¹ He still believed, however, that the language question should be dealt with in a permanent manner, and the best way to do so would be giving the Territorial Assembly the right to perpetuate or dispense of French according to its wishes.¹⁰²

Leader of the Opposition Wilfrid Laurier believed that local autonomy was dangerous for the francophone minority in the Territories. In a speech which foreshadowed his vision for the creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, Laurier argued that Parliament should wait until the regional political community took on a more concrete form, or have a major discussion as to what rights and liberties should be protected:

What has occurred is this: a population has gone into those Territories; they have been given a Legislature; and that Legislature has demanded certain measures--not only on the question of language, but on that of the schools, and on the system of Government. Bearing these facts in mind, it seems to me that the proper time to deal with this question will be when we are prepared to give the Territories, perhaps not absolute, but a more extended form of local self-government; and when that time comes, we must be prepared to deal with this question upon the broad principle of this Constitution, which has been devised for the safety of the minority and the protection of the minority, and in the light of the condition of things which may exist at that time in the Territories.¹⁰³

Laurier kept his comments focused on broader principles rather than the practical issue at hand. Indeed, most members said little at all about the Territories, preferring to meditate on long-standing grievances between English and French Canadians in Ontario and Quebec. In the Senate debates on the bill in April, Marc-Amable Girard, a long time defender of francophone

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 934.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 935.

¹⁰² Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 20 February 1890, 936.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1890, 744-745.

rights in the West, explained that "It would be but fair and just that a voice from the west should be heard on this occasion on behalf of the claim of the French people to be allowed the use of their language in all parts of the Dominion."¹⁰⁴ He used an argument in favour of language rights in the West grounded in the region's history. The francophones were the first to open up the region, Girard argued, and they were its first settlers. It should follow that the rest of Canada respect the historical character of the region rather than impose some sort of unilingual status on it: "It seems but reasonable, therefore, that the right to maintain our language should be respected by the population of the Dominion."¹⁰⁵

In the end, Minister of Justice Sir John Thompson introduced an amendment to give the Territorial Assembly power to regulate its own proceedings, the recording of proceedings, and publishing. The amendment passed with Davin, Laurier, and Dewdney all voting in favour; McCarthy opposed it. The Territorial newspapers followed the debate but interpreted its outcome differently. It seemed to settle neither the language question nor the related problem of self-government. The *Edmonton Bulletin* found Thompson's amendment to be underwhelming, leaving the question almost exactly where it was before.¹⁰⁶ Nicholas Flood Davin's newspaper, the *Regina Leader*, characterized McCarthy's bill as completely unnecessary since time and immigration would eventually accomplish more peacefully what McCarthy was trying to do politically.¹⁰⁷ The *Moose Jaw Herald Times* argued that "Scarcely any of the speakers in the lengthy debate appeared to understand the question or the position of things in the North-West, and drifted off into side issues that had no bearing whatever on the question."¹⁰⁸ The *Calgary Herald*, however, was more optimistic about the amendment and called it "a knock down blow to

¹⁰⁴ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, 28 April 1890, 598-599.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ "The Debate," *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 8 1890.

¹⁰⁷ "Dual Language," *Regina Leader*, January 28 1890 and "McCarthy's Mission," *Regina Leader*, March 11 1890.

¹⁰⁸ "The Dual Language Question," *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, February 28 1890.

French pretensions, a great discouragement and mortification to the French race throughout Canada."¹⁰⁹

During the November 1891 Territorial election the *Prince Albert Times* encouraged electors to demand candidates' views on dualism. Voters ought to take their decisions seriously, since "the foundations of the future are being laid."¹¹⁰ Candidates representing constituencies with notable francophone populations, such as Frank Oliver in Edmonton, were careful to make few promises and take conciliatory positions. Other candidates, especially Haultain, were unequivocal in their public declarations to abolish the separate school system and French as an official language.¹¹¹ Franco-Catholic clergymen, especially Bishop Grandin, vowed to throw their support behind candidates who were sympathetic to French interests; in constituencies with large francophone populations, the francophone clergy challenged candidates to make their views on schools and French explicit.¹¹²

As in 1888, the challenge for the francophone community was having enough pro-francophone candidates eligible for office. Joseph Royal suggested to the clergy that some of them consider running for office as a last resort. Archbishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché overruled the idea.¹¹³ The francophone vote did have some effect on local races. In Saskatchewan, James Clinkskill and John Felton Betts, both strong anti-dualism incumbents, almost lost because of a strong francophone turnout. Betts won by a margin of 47 votes, while Clinkskill won by only 34 votes.¹¹⁴ There was, however, an important victory for proponents of dualism. In the St. Albert electoral district, a young francophone lawyer named Antonio Prince narrowly beat Daniel

¹⁰⁹ "The Commons Debate," *Calgary Herald*, February 24 1890.

¹¹⁰ *Prince Albert Times*, September 23 1891.

¹¹¹ Haultain promised that he would "work and vote against it as hard as he could." See Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 67.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 68.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 67-68. See also "North-West Territories: Council and Legislative Assembly, 1876-1905," *Saskatchewan Executive and Legislative Directory, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan*, 22-23.

Maloney, an Irishman and fellow Catholic who enjoyed the support of the area's business community.¹¹⁵ Prince and Métis member-elect Charles Nolin (Batoche) would be the only two francophones in the Assembly, but it was better than having no representatives.¹¹⁶

The second Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories met on December 10. Royal read the Speech from the Throne in English only¹¹⁷, then later called upon Haultain to form an Executive Committee, a body now authorized by virtue of the updated *North-West Territories Act*. Haultain chose Clinkskill, Tweed, and Neff.¹¹⁸ They immediately set out to solve the Assembly's two most burning questions -- the French language and separate schools. Daniel Mowat, the member for South Regina who was formerly Mayor of that City, asked if the Executive Committee would determine "whether the debates of the House shall be in English."¹¹⁹ With a hint of frustration, Haultain reminded Mowat that the Executive Committee could not introduce any ordinances except those regarding expenditures, since the Committee was not a government per se, and Parliament had not yet granted the Territories full provincial status. He also reminded the Assembly that "The fullest liberty should be allowed any member to address the House in French or Hebrew or Greek if he saw fit. It was a matter that could very well be left to the good sense of the members themselves."¹²⁰ In terms of printing the journals in English only, however, Haultain assured the Assembly that a resolution was being prepared. On January 19, pleased that Assembly now had the power to do so, he moved that "it is desirable that the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly shall be recorded and published hereafter in the English

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Charles Nolin was eventually replaced in 1892 by another francophone, Charles Eugene Boucher because Nolin's election was set aside by judicial order in 1892. See "North-West Territories: Council and Legislative Assembly, 1876-1905," 21.

¹¹⁷ "Second Assembly," *Regina Leader*, December 15 1891.

¹¹⁸ "N.W. Parliament. Proceedings of the Week" *Regina Leader*, January 5 1892.

¹¹⁹ *Regina Leader*, January 12 1892.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

language only."¹²¹ For Haultain, the motivation was clear enough: the journals were "rarely, perhaps never, needed by any person who was unable to read them in English."¹²² The money would be better spent elsewhere. On division Haultain's resolution passed by twenty votes to four.

The Haultain resolution was an important step in the abolition of French in the Territorial political community. But the Assembly was not ready to stop there. Next, it attacked dualism in separate schools. Under the new *School Ordinance*, no clergyman could act as a superintendent, inspector, or trustee; there were few areas where the clergy could now participate in school governance. More important, however, was the amendment making English the sole language of instruction in all schools, regardless of denomination.¹²³ In December the Territorial Assembly adopted section 83 of the amended *School Ordinance*, which provided that "All schools shall be taught in the English language" with one clause allowing trustees to permit one primary course to be taught in French.¹²⁴ Royal assented to it on December 31. This provision on language of instruction would remain on the books in Saskatchewan, in more or less the same form, until 1967.

1892 was a bad year for francophones in the Territories. They had seen the end of dualism in the Legislative Assembly; now it had ended in education. Caught in the crossfire between British Canadian nationalists such as McCarthy and proponents of Territorial autonomy such as Haultain, francophones in the Territories could do little to defend the progressive erosion of dualism. For nationalists, French was in the way of a British west; for Haultain and

¹²¹ "The Assembly!," *Regina Leader*, January 26 1892.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 69-70.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 78-79. See also Aunger, "Justifying the End of Official Bilingualism," 466.

proponents of Territorial autonomy, French was in the way of wresting more power away from Central Canada.

Almost a century later, some scholars dispute whether or not Haultain's resolution actually had the effect of repealing the official status of French.¹²⁵ Royal only gave royal assent to the *School Ordinance*. As such, according to some authors such as Claude-Armand Sheppard, French still enjoyed official status in the Territories even after the Haultain resolution. From the point of view of the values of the political community, however, this assertion misses the mark. Whether or not Haultain's resolution had legal force matters less than the reality that after its adoption, the Territorial Assembly governed as though French no longer had any official status.¹²⁶

The Education Question in the Autonomy Bill debates, 1905

The changes to the North-West Territories legislation did not end controversies over the place of French and separate schools in the western political community. In 1905, as Parliament prepared to grant provincial status to the southern half of the Territories, the debate was divisive and acrimonious. It laid bare the differences in political vision and blueprints for western Canada, and ensured that antagonistic opinions on the place of the French language in the region would characterize western politics for another generation.¹²⁷ While this topic has been

¹²⁵ "We have come to the conclusion that French was never legally abolished in the legislature of the Northwest Territories because the resolution of Frederick Haultain was never proclaimed as required by the 1891 amendment to the North-West Territories Act. Indeed, the most diligent search has been unable to disclose any such proclamation." Claude-Armand Sheppard, *The Law of Languages in Canada* (Ottawa, Information Canada, 1971), 85. Sheppard's analysis is somewhat erroneous, however, since resolutions never receive royal assent, and thus do not have force of law.

¹²⁶ See for example Edmund A. Aunger, "The Mystery of the French Language Ordinances: An Investigation into Official Bilingualism and the Canadian North-West, 1870-1895," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 13, no. 1 (1998), 89-124.

¹²⁷ See for example Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 7-10. Peter A. Russell argued in an article that the "one vs. two provinces" debate had more fundamental effects on the overall outcome of the Prairies because it "completed the

examined thoroughly in the literature¹²⁸, it is worth recalling the two competing visions of Canada and the North-West which emerged during the autonomy bill debates. As historian H. Blair Neatby argues, the Autonomy Bills controversy should be understood as more than another educational crisis or the sequel to the Manitoba case in the 1890s:

...the similarity of the Manitoba school question of the 1890s to the school question of 1905 is misleading. The situation in the Territories in 1905 more nearly resembled the situation in Manitoba in 1870. At both times the problem was the creation of a province, and the determination of the educational system within the province.¹²⁹

In other words, in 1905 as in 1870, the political crisis was more a question of character, or the nature of the political community to be created in the new provinces rather than of constitutional politics. While the Manitoba Schools question was undoubtedly a major political crisis in Canadian history that involved competing notions of Canada and western Canada, the autonomy bills crisis of 1905 bears a closer resemblance to the crisis in national legitimacy that led to the creation of Manitoba in 1870. During the creation of Manitoba, as during the creation of Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Canadian state and its leaders were called upon to state their philosophy and understanding of Canada itself. In 1905, however, proponents of a British Canada, and those who favoured a bicultural Canada, were both determined not to repeat the "mistakes" of 1870.

political fragmentation of the region." See Russell, "Rhetorics of Identity: The Debate over Division of the North-West Territories, 1890-1905," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 20, no. 4 (Winter 1985-86), 99-114. This dissertation argues that, on the contrary, it was the schools question that had a much longer and fundamental effect on the overall political trajectory of the region, because it dominated debates over the character of the political community in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba for another 30 years.

¹²⁸ See for example C. Cecil Lingard, *Territorial Government in Canada: The Autonomy Question in the Old North-West Territories* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1946); Waiser, *Saskatchewan*; J. William Brennan, "The 'Autonomy Question' and the Creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan," in R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (eds.), *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton, Pica Pica Press, 1985), 362-379; R.C. Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974); E. Eager, "The Constitution of Saskatchewan," *Saskatchewan History* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1962); David E. Smith (ed.), *Building a Province: A History of Saskatchewan in Documents* (Saskatoon, Fifth House, 1992).

¹²⁹ H. Blair Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Study in Political Management*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Department of History, University of Toronto, 1956, 257.

At first, the schools question did not figure prominently in any discussions of provincial autonomy, though Laurier remarked in a letter to Sifton that "everybody fears it."¹³⁰ Haultain's main concerns were provincial control over public lands and natural resources, provincial rights that at the time fell outside of the Territorial Assembly's jurisdiction.¹³¹ As for dualism and separate school rights, Haultain believed that they had both been modified and dealt with to his satisfaction.¹³² He did, however, think that the new provinces should have the right to deal exclusively with education.¹³³ Laurier hoped that provisions related to separate schools would pass easily through Parliament even though education was, in his mind, "perhaps under existing circumstances the most important of all that we have to deal with."¹³⁴

On 21 February 1905 Laurier introduced the *Alberta Act* and *Saskatchewan Act*. Speaking on separate schools, Laurier appealed for Protestant-Catholic reconciliation. Compromise between Protestants, Catholics, English and French speakers, Laurier argued, was a key principle of Confederation. By perpetuating Catholic school rights in the new provinces, Parliament would be fulfilling the promise of compromise embodied in Confederation. Laurier was in a difficult position. He was under a great deal of pressure from all sides. One of the major tenets of his political philosophy was provincial rights, a stance which made him popular in Quebec but caused him all sorts of trouble when francophone minorities in the West came under attack. It would again cause him problems in 1905. As the House of Commons prepared for the

¹³⁰ Quoted in Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, vol. II, 171.

¹³¹ Brennan, "The 'Autonomy Question' and the Creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1905," 378-384.

¹³² As he remarked in an interview to the *Toronto Globe* four days after the autonomy bills were tabled, he would not change the current arrangement in education: "If I were made a dictator tomorrow, I would not change it." "Premier Haultain on Separate Schools," *Toronto Globe*, 28 February 1905; see also "Haultain Speaks of Autonomy Bill," *Toronto Globe*, 25 February 1905. Indeed, by 1901 English was the only language of instruction in Territorial schools, unless a board allowed for one primary course to be taught in French. *Ordinance Respecting Schools*, s. 138, ch. 29, 1901 (North-West Territories, Canada). For a more in-depth discussion of the evolution of separate schools during the Territorial years, see Manoly Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*.

¹³³ Brennan, "The 'Autonomy Question'," 386.

¹³⁴ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 21 February 1905, 1441.

new session in February, local francophones in the Territories, in addition to the national Catholic hierarchy, put pressure on Laurier.¹³⁵ They wanted separate schools and the official use of French enshrined in the new provinces' constitutions.¹³⁶ Opponents of French as an official language and separate schools were equally adamant in their belief that neither had a place in the region.¹³⁷

The opposition, led by Robert L. Borden (who later succeeded Laurier as Prime Minister), immediately pounced on the legislation. Borden accused Laurier of raising "in the Northwest of Canada for all time to come that question which happily has been entirely absent there in the past."¹³⁸ Meanwhile, Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton rushed back from his vacation in the United States and promptly realized that Laurier was attempting to entrench full equality of separate schools in the new provinces' constitutions. Sifton found the move unacceptable and immediately resigned.

Sifton did not share Laurier's view that Canada was a compact or compromise between two founding peoples. This principle, as Sifton understood it, simply could not apply to the West.¹³⁹ The West was a new land, transformed by Sifton's own immigration policy since he took over the Interior portfolio in 1896. English-only "national schools"¹⁴⁰ teaching civic, British

¹³⁵ The Société Saint-Jean Baptiste d'Edmonton, for example, implored Laurier to respect the "legitimate rights" of French-speaking Catholics in the region, especially with regards to schools and the French language. Quoted in Lingard, *Territorial Government in Canada*, 134-135.

¹³⁶ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 166; Hall, "A Divergence of Principle," 5-8.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 21 February 1905, 1463.

¹³⁹ It should be noted, for example, that Sifton played a prominent role in Thomas Greenway's Liberal government in Manitoba during the early 1890s, especially as Attorney General when that province was embroiled in the Manitoba Schools crisis. See Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, vol. I, (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1981), 34-122. Later during the 1905 debate on separate schools, Sifton noted that "...if there is any act in my public life I am proud of, it is the fact that I was one of those who helped to abolish that system of education in Manitoba in the year 1890." Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 23 March 1905, 3111.

¹⁴⁰ The term 'national' schools which was derived from the United States was also used in Ontario and generally seems to have been associated with anti-Catholic nativism. Stripped to its essentials, a national system was intended to forge a homogenous nationality from the disparate ethnic groups comprising the population." Hall, *Clifford Sifton*,

values were the only option for the region flooded with newcomers from all over Europe. Sifton cut his political teeth in the charged atmosphere of language politics in Manitoba during the 1880s and 1890s, and his mind was made up about dualism and separate schools.¹⁴¹ He was no ideologue, but his resignation shows the extent to which the autonomy controversy struck at the heart of the western Canadian political community in the making. What sort of character would the region's schools, politics, and society have? Would French-speaking Catholics be given a privileged place in western institutions along with English Protestants, or would they simply be one minority among many in a British region? Sifton understood the implications of mass immigration on civil society in the West. He believed schools should be the cornerstone of a British political community in the region. In order to build a strong and united Canada, it was important that all Canadians, no matter what their origins, be "inculcated with a common set of British values."¹⁴² Furthermore, unlike Laurier, Sifton saw Confederation as limiting French Canada, as well as confessional schools, to the province of Quebec.

The *Regina Standard* understood the schools question from Borden's point of view: a province's right to determine its own education system. It argued that Laurier was attempting to "tie the hands" of North-Westerners by refusing them freedom to choose their own path on schools.¹⁴³ The *Edmonton Bulletin*, a Liberal paper owned by Frank Oliver (who succeeded Sifton as Minister of the Interior), noted the increasing clamour in the Territories surrounding the

vol. I, 46. More recently, Kerry Alcorn argued in *Border Crossings: US Culture and Education in Saskatchewan, 1905-1937* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013) that the American system, especially in the Great Plains states, had the most influence on the Saskatchewan education system in its formative years. While Alcorn offers a convincing argument, it should be noted that the American or Anglo-Ontarian origins matter less than the reality that both educational systems prided themselves on a national, civic education that provided for assimilation of foreigners and a common language and values for all.

¹⁴¹ Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, vol. I, 34-52.

¹⁴² Hall, "A Divergence of Principle," 19. See also Hall, "Clifford Sifton's Vision of the Prairie West," 77-100.

¹⁴³ *Regina Standard*, 1 March 1905.

school question.¹⁴⁴ The anger over schools fit into a more general discontent surrounding public lands and the division of the two provinces.¹⁴⁵ Separate schools were seen by many as having no real legitimacy in the North-West, either from a cultural or political point of view. "A system imposed upon them in 1875," fumed Robert Borden, "which has continued from that time to the present, is now sought to be made perpetual. The people did not freely establish separate schools in the Northwest, but these were established under the terms of a statute in framing which the people had no voice."¹⁴⁶ Frederick Haultain took a similar position on schools in an open letter to the press on 11 March. The proposed legislation

...has, further, the effect of petrifying the positive law of the Province with regard to a subject coming within its exclusive jurisdiction and necessitating requests for imperial legislation whenever the rapidly changing conditions of a new country may require them...I recognize neither right nor justice in the attempt to dictate to the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan the manner in which they shall conduct their own business...The new Provinces have their own futures to work out, and I deplore the possibility that they may commence their careers torn with dissension upon such subjects as these.¹⁴⁷

The West was under construction. According to Haultain and other opponents of the legislation, it was important to recognize that the region was in its political and social infancy; the newness of the region required local flexibility. Enshrining separate schools in the provincial constitutions perpetuated the British-Protestant and French-Catholic dualism of central Canada. Ideally, at least in the mind of leaders like Clifford Sifton, the West would leave behind the bitter disputes between the two nationalisms which plagued other parts of Canada.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ See for example "Opposed to Separate Schools," 27 February 1905; "Separate Schools not Wanted," 6 March 1905, both in *Edmonton Bulletin*. One amendment was tabled, however, the *Bulletin* noted that many people were satisfied, including George Bulyea. "Bulyea Satisfied," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 5 April 1905.

¹⁴⁵ See for example *Calgary Herald*, 22 February 1905; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 22 February 1905; *Regina Leader*, 1 March 1905. *Le Leader* was least strident in its criticisms, however, being the political organ of Walter Scott.

¹⁴⁶ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 22 March 1905, 2949.

¹⁴⁷ "The Case of the West Stated by Mr. Haultain," *Toronto Globe*, 13 March 1905.

¹⁴⁸ Hall, "Clifford Sifton's Vision of the Prairie West," 97.

In Parliament, Maitland S. McCarthy, member for Calgary, and R.S. Lake (Qu'Appelle) argued that the autonomy bills were unacceptable since Sifton had resigned and the West now had no ministerial representative in Cabinet.¹⁴⁹ John Herron, a former founding NWMP officer, rancher, and Member of Parliament for the Alberta provisional district, argued against the French-Canadian idea that the francophone minority in the region had special rights or deserved any kind of special consideration. The history of the region, at least as Herron understood it, did not permit that kind of interpretation of minority rights.¹⁵⁰

On 28 March Henri Bourassa took the floor. Bourassa, a young Liberal member already well-known to Laurier because of his knowledge, potential, and passion for politics, was the most ardent defender of separate schools during the autonomy bill debates.¹⁵¹ He held nothing back in his defense of the French Canadian nation. "The men who are committing a crime against this nation," he thundered, "are those who, having opinions of their own, are trying to shelter themselves under a constitutional pretense."¹⁵² The West, Bourassa explained, did not belong solely to English Canada. The Territories "were purchased and paid for by the people of Canada as a whole."¹⁵³ Bourassa reminded the House that the history of the Territories showed little proof that the majority would be kind to the French Canadians:

We have frequently been told: Why can't you trust the majority of the people of the Northwest? Well, Sir, here again I must speak frankly, and I say: No, we cannot...continuing myself to a survey of past events, I say now that we cannot trust the present majority of the people of the Northwest to stand for right and justice. Their record is before us...I have no confidence in Mr. Haultain, who now comes here posing as our friend, but who was one of the first men to start a movement in the legislative assembly to abolish the separate schools.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 15 March 1905, 2516-2522.

¹⁵⁰ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 25 April 1905, 4878-4879.

¹⁵¹ Réal Bélanger, "BOURASSA, HENRI," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. XVIII (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2009); Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 137-162.

¹⁵² Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 28 March 1905, 3254.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3262.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3269-3271.

What did the Liberal members representing western constituencies believe? Laurier let Walter Scott, who later became the first Premier of Saskatchewan, take the lead for the Liberal caucus. Scott was conciliatory in his defence of the autonomy bills. He reminded the House that before second reading the education clauses were amended to perpetuate the existing Territorial legislation. Even Haultain, Scott pointed out, agreed with the status quo. Scott was also one of the only members of Parliament to say that the Territorial legislation protected not only Catholics in areas where they were a minority, but also Protestants when they found themselves in the same situation.¹⁵⁵ As for the French language, he had no doubts that the question had been settled by the Territorial Assembly.¹⁵⁶ The debate on second reading ended on 3 May. That day Borden proposed amendments to the bills that would allow both new provinces to have exclusive jurisdiction over education; on division they were defeated by a large margin, with western MPs voting along party lines.¹⁵⁷

English-speaking Provinces: The French Language in the Autonomy Debates, 1905

As the House of Commons went into Committee of the Whole on 30 June 1905, members debated the place of French in the new provinces. Frederick D. Monk, Conservative member for Jacques Cartier and ardent nationaliste¹⁵⁸, proposed an amendment: either English or French be official in the legislature, courts, printed laws, and journals of the assembly.¹⁵⁹ Basically, the amendment repeated provisions made for French and English in the *North-West Territories Act*,

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3591-3592.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3633.

¹⁵⁷ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 194-195; see also Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 3 May 1905, 5400-5401.

¹⁵⁸ For many years, Monk attempted to reform the Conservative party to make its values more suited to French Canadian nationalism, especially the bi-cultural nationalism that arose in the province following the Manitoba Schools crisis in the 1890s. See François Béland, "MONK, FREDERICK DEBARTZCH," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. XIV (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1998); see also Béland, "F.D. Monk, le Parti conservateur fédéral et l'idée d'un Canada pour les Canadiens, 1896-1914," MA Thesis, Université Laval, 1986.

¹⁵⁹ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 30 June 1905, 8530.

1877. The goal of the amendment, Monk explained, was to enshrine French in the constitution, giving it a status "which has always existed from time immemorial."¹⁶⁰ Monk's amendment for dualism would "secure the maintenance of the solemn agreement which was entered into when Rupert's Land was incorporated into and became a part of the Dominion of Canada."¹⁶¹

Monk's proposal kicked off another long debate over the history of the West. Like Bourassa, Monk understood French Canadians as responsible for the region's early development. Monk gave a detailed account of the Red River resistance in 1869-70 and explained how constitutional protections for French were among the inhabitants' concerns. Referring to earlier debates in Parliament and in the West over the French language, Monk argued that anti-French politicians were simply wrong in their view of the region's history.¹⁶² Dualism, Monk maintained, deserved special protection because it was French speakers who opened the territory.¹⁶³ He also criticized the argument that the francophones did not deserve special rights because there were many other ethnic groups in the west. Monk raised a final argument against people who placed the French language on the same level as other minority group languages because the francophones "were the pioneers of the country and, as I stated before, they obtained that guarantee which to us ought to be sacred."¹⁶⁴

Predictably, Monk's speech started a firestorm of protest from almost everyone, including some French Canadian Liberals and Conservatives. Wilfrid Laurier characterized the amendment as unacceptable because it would, in his view, "limit the right of the new provinces in the matter of language and to do for the French language what we have done for the schools."¹⁶⁵ In other

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 8539.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8544.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8571.

words, if Parliament tried too strongly to protect French, it could create a backlash.¹⁶⁶ Laurier's position on French was ironic. He used the local legislature or provincial rights argument to support not entrenching French, while on separate schools he had argued against the principle. The question, Laurier added should "be dealt with by them as they see fit in the best interests of the public."¹⁶⁷ Why? The *British North America Act* provided for some separate school rights across the country, while it only mentioned Quebec in terms of language rights.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, Laurier argued, Monk "...has failed in his attempt to show that the French people in the Northwest Territories can claim the right of the use of their language upon any authority in the British North America Act or upon any reasons which are to be found in the history to which allusion has been made."¹⁶⁹

Once again Henri Bourassa rose to defend the principle of dualism in the West. "What are we doing," Bourassa asked, "at the present time by this legislation? We are not creating two provinces for five or ten years. What will be the character of the population of those provinces in the future?"¹⁷⁰ It was a question of justice for the two founding peoples of the country. Furthermore, "...if it is true that in 1901 only four per cent of the population was French, it is equally true that only 47 per cent was English speaking, including Scotch, Irish, and Welsh."¹⁷¹ Having English as the new provinces' sole official language was not a neutral measure, it was a calculated one which took into consideration the desired character of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

¹⁶⁶ "...Parliament may have the power to do everything but I deprecate the day when the French people of this country shall ask parliament to do anything that they have the power to do if they have not at the same time the right to do it. These are the reasons for which I ask that this motion shall not be granted. I say in the presence of friends and foes, in the hearing of the people in all parts of Canada and especially in the province of Quebec, that if we should grant this motion we would be granting the worst measure that could be granted for the protection even of the very people whom it intends to serve." *Ibid.*, 8581.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 8571.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8572.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8577.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8589.

Before voting on Monk's amendment, Robert Borden added his own thoughts to the debate. The new provinces, Borden told the House, were not the same as Manitoba, nor did they represent the Confederation pact of 1867 -- if there even was one. The Territories were different. Borden even said that he valued the French language in principle, but the principle of provincial rights, of the right of the new provinces to determine their own destiny, was paramount.¹⁷²

On division, around midnight, Monk's amendment was easily defeated by the government by 69 to 6 votes. None of the Territorial members voted in its favour. On 5 July both Bourassa and Monk again attempted to introduce French as an official language into the autonomy bills before third reading, and again they were defeated by wide margins (140 to 7 and 149 to 7). None of the Territorial members on either side of the House supported any of these amendments to make French the second official language of the new provinces. As a result, with section 16 of the new *Alberta* and *Saskatchewan* acts carrying over Territorial legislation and ordinances into the new provinces' legislative frameworks, the status of French in the new provinces remained ambiguous.

The autonomy bills were a major political defeat for proponents of a pan-national, bilingual Canada and a victory for a British West. As western Canadian historian D.J. Hall explains,

[Laurier's] one attempt to entrench and possibly extend minority rights had been firmly limited. The occasion of granting provincial autonomy was symbolic for the French-Canadian minority, because it was probably the last chance that the federal government would have to guarantee or expand minority languages in the West, even in the limited area of education. It seemed to be the last opportunity to give substance to the ideal of pan-Canadian dualism, to give effect to the role of the federal government as protector of minority interests, and to recognize the aspirations of many French Canada.¹⁷³

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 8627-8628.

¹⁷³ Hall, "A Divergence of Principle," 19. See also Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 156-157.

The autonomy bills mark the end of the first era of political controversies over French language rights and dualism in western Canada. Laurier's failure to entrench full equality for confessional schools, and Monk's attempt to have French recognized in the new provinces' constitutions, were major losses for the now small minority of French speakers in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

It is worth here to briefly discuss one other point. Clifford Sifton's resignation made explicit the difference in principle, policy, vision, and historical memory that drove the schools and language issues in the autonomy bill debates. Sifton saw the West as a different land, one that did not adhere to the definitions many central Canadian politicians applied to it. Considered in this light, Sifton was instrumental in determining the principles of the political community of Saskatchewan. Given his background as a provincial politician in Manitoba, as well as his role in the autonomy bills crisis, he should be considered a founding father of the region along with Haultain. While Sifton's vision for the West was not particularly unique or original -- it reflected widely-held beliefs of his time -- he was in a privileged position to see that vision fully realized.¹⁷⁴ His categorical refusal to allow dualism or full separate school equality in the West, first in Manitoba and then Saskatchewan and Alberta, along with his bringing in of thousands of peoples from across the world to settle the region, fundamentally changed the region's character.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the importance of controversies over dualism and the place of French in western Canada between 1870 and 1905. It contends that during these years, the region was a major battleground for local and national issues related to the French language. At pivotal moments in this period of western Canadian political history, the status of French was part of major debates over the character of the region. Dualism was more than a legal, constitutional, or

¹⁷⁴ Hall, "Clifford Sifton's Vision of the Prairie West," 78.

even administrative concern -- it was a question of the deepest symbolic, cultural, and political meaning. What kind of political community would western Canada be?

The primary driving force behind the elimination of French as an official language in Manitoba and the North-West Territories was British Canadian nationalism and the Territorial autonomy movement led by Frederick Haultain. Although historians of western Canada have had much to say about Anglo-Saxon nationalism and racism towards minorities during the settlement era¹⁷⁵, this chapter argues that the movement for a British western Canada had a first enemy: the francophones. Much earlier than the first real massive waves of settlement which arrived in western Canada after 1896, debates on the place of French as an official language figured prominently in the regional politics.

It would be erroneous to argue, however, that it was only extremists or the most zealous British Canadians who were against French. Rather, eliminating dualism along the lines of "one language, one nation, one school" was an idea that the English-speaking majority could rally behind. British Canadian nationalism joined with local political grievances in the West to create a potent anti-French politics. The struggle for responsible government in the North-West Territories, for example, used anti-French discourse as part of its political strategy to rally the population and wrest more power out of Ottawa. In the North-West Territories, the French language served as proof to local legislators of the "colonial" and "inferior" status that the Territories had vis-à-vis Ottawa.

¹⁷⁵ See for example David Flint, *The Hutterites: A Study in Prejudice* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1975); W. Entz, "The Suppression of the German Language Press in September 1918," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 8 (1976), 56-70; Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1982); Donald Avery, *"Dangerous Foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1979); J.C. Lehr, "Government Coercion in the Settlement of Ukrainian Immigrants in Western Canada," *Prairie Forum* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1983), 179-194; R. Bruce Shepard, *Deemed Unsuitable* (Toronto, Umbrella Press, 1996); J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within our Gates* (Toronto, F.C. Stephenson, 1909); and Jeremy Adelman, "Early Doukhobor Experience on the Canadian Prairies," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 25, no. 4 (Winter 1991), 111-128.

For francophone leaders there was a similar confluence of local and national political factors which shaped their workings on the language question. The pan-Canadian nationalism of the Franco-Catholic clergy and French Canadian nationalists in Quebec such as Henri Bourassa fed into a small, local western Canadian movement to preserve French as an official language. Francophones in the West, however, unlike their French Canadian allies in Quebec who saw French language rights and separate schools as stemming from a long history dating back to 1763, viewed language rights as based in the old order of the Prairie West. Territorial francophone leaders such as Joseph Royal, for example, although originally from Quebec, defended the status of French and Catholic schools from a regional historical perspective rather than a national one. The French had opened the region, had been its first settlers, had acted as crucial intermediaries between Indians and Europeans from the earliest days -- why would they not be recognized as a founding people of the region? This interpretation of history and politics, while drawing somewhat from the knowledge of Quebec as the centre of French Canada and francophone culture, also sought to legitimize the place of French in a region whose historical and social circumstances differed greatly from la Belle province.

In other words, dualism did not necessarily mean for western francophones what it meant for those in Quebec, since it had a different history. Knowledge of this historical difference, however, did not preclude francophones in the region from espousing elements of broader French-Canadian nationalism, and they often looked to Quebec for political and demographic support. But once western francophone leaders realized mass immigration from Quebec would not be forthcoming, they became more interested in defending what they felt were their existing and hard-won rights rather than making the region liveable for new francophone immigrants.

British Canadian nationalists and political leaders did their best to ensure that the western Canadian political community would reflect their vision for cultural and linguistic homogeneity. In this respect, anti-French leaders in the Territories differed little from their allies in Ontario and other parts of Canada. But they differed in how they interpreted the language question as affecting their own political circumstances. Regional responses to the language question did not always follow what central Canadians thought. For British Canadian political leaders in western Canada, French was not only a local problem stemming from the Riel and Métis agitations, it was also something imposed by Ottawa. They could not stand that Ottawa had forced dualism on western institutions even though the region's settler population was overwhelmingly English-speaking. Western leaders in Manitoba and the Territories certainly believed in the importance of British institutions in the West, but they had no interest in perpetuating what they saw as a facet of central Canadian history and politics -- dualism and separate schools. What was needed for conciliation between Ontario and Quebec, they thought, had little to do with the region. Neither dualism nor separate schools had any place in the new society being created in the West.

Thus, in a way, although British Canadian leaders in the region had succeeded in ridding themselves of what they believed had nothing to do with them, they failed in their goals because language and religion, rather than being questions of another region and another past, dominated the political foundation of western Canada. Indeed, D.J. Hall's conclusion that autonomy was the last fight over language in the West cannot be accepted. In 1905 people in Ottawa worried that the schools question in particular would drag on for years. Senator James A. Lougheed, representative for Calgary (Alberta after 1905) argued that separate schools would be "a bone of contention" in the new provinces because it seemed to perpetuate Territorial legislation which

was meant to be temporary.¹⁷⁶ As the following chapter demonstrates, the controversies of the 1870-1905 period spilled over into provincial politics in Saskatchewan. Provincial autonomy did not usher in a new era of religious and linguistic peace for the new provinces; rather, both Saskatchewan and Alberta inherited a troubled history of language politics.

¹⁷⁶ Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*, 204.

CHAPTER TWO

"The Shadow of Politics": Saskatchewan's French-Language Question, 1905-1931

Nos adversaires savent, comme nous le savons nous-mêmes, que l'influence de l'école est toute-puissante. Du maintien de nos écoles dépend l'avenir de notre race. Si nous voulons que nos enfants conservent l'idéal français, si nous voulons qu'ils parlent et qu'ils aiment la langue française, il est nécessaire qu'ils l'apprennent à l'école; car une langue qui ne s'enseigne pas à l'école est une langue appelée à disparaître; une langue qui ne se lit pas, qui ne s'écrit pas, est une langue appelée à s'oublier. La langue est en même temps la plus sûre gardienne de notre foi religieuse. Nos adversaires le savent; c'est pourquoi ils s'attaquent à l'enseignement de notre langue, sapant ainsi à la base les assises fondamentales de notre race.

- Raymond Denis¹

It is essential to national unity and solidarity that the people of any country should be able to converse and conduct their business in a common tongue. That such a condition does not exist throughout the Dominion of Canada no one can deny. In every western land office, and in almost every judicial district, we find official interpreters...Of course, these conditions are temporarily unavoidable, and nothing else could be expected owing to the heavy tide of immigration during the past decade. But the future of Canada depends upon the betterment of these conditions. There must be one medium of communication from coast to coast, and that the English language.

- Dr. J.T.M. Anderson²

Introduction

Frederick Haultain, the former Territorial Premier, was angry. Not only had his plan for a single western province and provincial control of crown lands been foiled by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier and the federal Liberals, but Ottawa had also imposed separate schools on the new provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.³ Haultain was also denied the first provincial premiership when Forget asked Liberal politician Walter Scott to form a ministry.

This chapter examines key events in Saskatchewan's first generation of political history: the first Saskatchewan general election (1905), the First World War (1914 to 1918), post-war school/language controversies (1918-1925), and the Anderson government's rise and fall (1925-1934). During this period, a determined British-Canadian movement hostile to the French

¹ Quoted in Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 217.

² "The Language Question," in *The Education of the New Canadian: A Treatise on Canada's Greatest Educational Problem* (Toronto, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1918), 92.

³ D.J. Hall, "1904-1905: Alberta Proclaimed," in *Alberta Formed, Alberta Transformed* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Athabasca University Press, 2006), 348-349. As Hall also explains in his biography of Clifford Sifton, the federal government's "determination was that the settlement should be a Liberal one." Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, vol. II, 171.

language, dualism, and Quebec made its mark on the province by reinforcing the path established during the 1870 to 1905 period. Although Saskatchewan political leaders held a firm consensus on what type of society they wanted to create, they believed that the cultural character of Saskatchewan was fragile and that the work of creating a British West was not yet complete.

Francophone involvement in these political events was inevitable because political unrest and regional political fervour in Saskatchewan centred on separate schools and non-English language instruction. The francophones, well-organized and supported by the provincial Liberal machine and francophone-dominated Catholic clergy, were viewed in some British-Canadian circles as particularly dangerous because they had a powerful ally in Quebec and in Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government. As western Canadian historian Gerald Friesen explains,

Relations between French and English-speaking Canadians, and between Roman Catholics and Protestants, have often posed serious problems for the Canadian nation. In the West, the issue was complicated because very few French-speaking and large numbers of east European immigrants arrived during the period of settlement. Western defiance of biculturalism, and western suspicions of Roman Catholicism contributed to the popular allegation that French Canadians were a malevolent force in national councils...The western ideals of provincial rights and a new nationality had little in common with the national necessity of French-English harmony, and distrust of eastern rule could easily be translated into distrust of French Canadian Roman Catholics.⁴

British Canadians took decisive action to counter what they saw as increasing French-Canadian and Central-Canadian political influence in the region. In their view, under no circumstances could French-speaking, Catholic Quebec be extended to western Canada.

The Land of New Beginnings? Saskatchewan's First Provincial Election, 1905

Frederick Haultain's frustration over federal government control of resources and separate schools was contrasted by the enthusiasm at the provincial inauguration ceremonies in

⁴ Gerald Friesen, *Studies in the Development of Western Canadian Regional Consciousness*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Department of History, University of Toronto (1973), 40-41.

Saskatchewan in September 1905. Feelings of British Canadian nationalism and triumphalism were palpable, as though the movement for expansion and settlement of the West had finally succeeded. But there was still work to do. In the minds of Governor General Lord Grey and many others, the blueprint for the political community of Canada's newest provinces was unmistakable. Saskatchewan, and neighbouring Alberta, ought to be British in language, religion, creed, and overall character.⁵ In Saskatchewan and Alberta, British Canadians finally had a chance to create an ideal society along British lines and unfettered by the problems of older Canada.⁶ As Gerald Friesen argues,

This militant view of British civilization was a crucial aspect of the western Canadian image. But, if western Canadian leaders were proud of their British heritage, they were not complacent about British social achievements. They insisted that they lived on a frontier and had the freedom to improve upon the parent culture...The frontier, in western Canada as in the United States, was the land of new beginnings.⁷

In Saskatchewan, however, bitterness over the autonomy bills lingered, and the separate school question dominated the 1905 general election.⁸ Haultain, now leader of the new Provincial Rights Party, cast himself as the province's foremost defender of non-sectarian schools and provincial rights. "Asked as to the issue," the *Toronto Globe* reported, "the reply was 'Provincial rights', and when queried as to whether the school question was not the issue, Mr.

⁵ Waiser, "The Myth of Multiculturalism in Early Saskatchewan," 61-62. See also Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 340.

⁶ The *Edmonton Bulletin* trumpeted in 1906 that "The ideal of the West is not only greatness, but greatness achieved under the British flag and stamped and moulded by the genius of race." Quoted in Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 23. See also Palmer, "Strangers and Stereotypes: The Rise of Nativism, 1880-1920," in R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (eds.), *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, 2nd ed. (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1992), 311.

⁷ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 342.

⁸ The literature on both Saskatchewan and Alberta confirm that separate schools were the defining topic of the 1905 elections. See for example David E. Smith, *Prairie Liberalism: The Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, 1905-1971* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1975), 23; Lewis G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905-1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959). Indeed, as Gerald Friesen argues, the schools question was more than a wartime issue from 1914-1918; it preoccupied prairie leaders since the turn of the twentieth century. Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 346.

Haultain said it was one of the main issues."⁹ During the election campaign, Haultain charged that the Liberal party of Saskatchewan had fallen under the influence of the Catholic church and that Walter Scott had made a political "compact" with Catholic leaders to "effect the destruction of the national school system by granting special privileges in minority schools to the Roman Catholics."¹⁰ The allegation was based on a memorandum released and published in a Regina newspaper by Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface, who argued that Haultain was no friend of French Catholics and that francophones should vote as a bloc for the party most sympathetic to them: in this case, the Liberal party.¹¹ Meanwhile, newspapers sympathetic to Haultain lambasted the Catholic church for "meddling" in the election.¹² Other militant British groups such as the Orange Order¹³ sent circulars to Saskatchewan Protestants arguing that Rome and Catholic Quebec were colluding to determine the outcome of Saskatchewan's political future.¹⁴ To the Orangemen and other anti-French groups, the gaining of provincial status had little effect in reducing the menacing influence of French Canadians and Quebec on western Canada. In 1912, for example, the Grand Orange Lodge of Saskatchewan outlined its view of dualism as one of the principal challenges for the province:

⁹ "Provincial Rights - Mr. Haultain Says That is the Whole Issue," *Toronto Globe*, 30 September 1905.

¹⁰ "Premier Scott to Mr. Haultain, Denies His Charges and Challenges Him to Proof," *Toronto Globe*, 4 December 1905. Haultain would continue to insist several months later that the election had been fixed by crooked agents working for the Liberals, including the Catholic hierarchy. "Why Haultain is Out," *Toronto Globe*, 5 April 1906.

¹¹ Huel, "La survivance in Saskatchewan," 48; Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 23. Langevin called Haultain "injuste et tyrannique" and "persécuteur des Catholiques."

¹² J. William Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan, 1905-1929," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Alberta, Department of History, 1976, 66.

¹³ The Orange Order emerged in Northern Ireland during the late 18th century during a major period of Protestant-Catholic strife. Its name recalls King William of Orange, the Protestant monarch whose victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 assured that the British Crown would not fall into the hands of Catholic James II. The Order's main principles were loyalty to the British Crown, Protestant hegemony, and resistance to Catholicism in all public affairs. See H. Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain, 1775-1836* (London, Routledge, 1966). The first Orange Lodge in western Canada was founded in 1870, shortly after the arrival of Col. Garnet Wolseley's contingent at Red River. By the early 1930s the Order reached a membership of roughly 68,000 in 274 lodges across the region. See Cecil J. Houston, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Michael Cottrell, "The Irish in Saskatchewan, 1850-1930: A Study of Intergenerational Ethnicity," *Prairie Forum* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999), 194.

¹⁴ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan, 1905-1929," 1976, 78-82.

We have the danger of bilingualism or rather polylingualism in our province -- There are schools in this province today where English is treated as a foreign language -- As Canadians we desire to see the children of our foreign population develop into good citizens of the Dominion. We cannot hope to make the foreign element absorb the British ideals until they first master the means of communication of those ideals, the English language. The preliminary teaching of which should be acquired in schools.¹⁵

The Liberal party fired back with a circular stating that the Provincial Rights party was making "rankly false" declarations about separate schools. It reminded readers that under the new provincial constitution, "No better system of national schools has been devised."¹⁶ The Liberals assured Saskatchewanians that the province's schools would serve their intended purpose of assimilation.

The Provincial Rights party strategy played directly into the hands of the Liberal party.¹⁷ Well-organized and supported by its federal counterpart, the Liberals staked their electoral success on minority settler communities by promising patronage and some cultural protections, and won easily.¹⁸ They won sixteen seats, seven of which were in ridings with large numbers of Roman Catholics and other religious minorities, while all nine of the Provincial Rights Party seats were in predominantly British Canadian and Protestant ridings.¹⁹ Both the Liberal and Provincial Rights parties believed that electoral success could be found by exploiting the schools and language question in one form or another. Indeed, although Haultain lost the election, his

¹⁵ Cottrell, "The Irish in Saskatchewan, 1850-1930: A Study of Intergenerational Ethnicity," *Prairie Forum* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999), 198. Dr. J.T.M. Anderson, who later became premier of Saskatchewan, was a member of the Order throughout the 1920s and played a prominent role in its organization in Saskatoon. See *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Not an Issue of Schools But of Veracity," Liberal Party pamphlet, 1905. Walter Scott Papers, Peel's Prairie Provinces (Peel 2869), University of Alberta.

¹⁷ Liberal leaders warned minorities, especially Catholics, that their opponents were appealing to the religious and racial prejudices of the British majority in order to win the election. A vote for the Liberals on the other hand was a vote in favour of British fair play, minority accommodation, and separate school rights. See for example J. William Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan, 1905-1929," 78. David E. Smith argues that the Liberals won at least seven constituencies based on the minority ethnic votes. Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 23-24.

¹⁸ It is important to note, however, that the Liberal party still supported assimilation; the maintaining of non Anglo-Saxon cultures was mainly a political trade-off that the Liberals accepted in order to consolidate power. See *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁹ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 83.

party still received over 47% of the popular vote.²⁰ The partisan and sectarian split was more than a simple invention of the warring political parties. It was a legacy of territorial politics before 1905. Saskatchewan remained divided between those satisfied with some form of accommodation for religious and linguistic minorities, and those who felt that only one language and one faith could triumph.

From a purely legal or constitutional point of view, it is somewhat curious that Haultain and the Provincial Rights Party made such a fuss over separate schools in Saskatchewan. Only months earlier during the autonomy bill debates, Haultain said publicly that he was happy with the 1901 Territorial legislation. He knew very well that the 1901 *School Ordinance* adopted by the territorial assembly was quite restrictive on both religious instruction (none allowed during regular school hours) and teaching in languages other than English.²¹ Why, then, did Haultain make it his primary cause? The answer lies in a burgeoning regional consciousness, a "westernness" amongst some members of the population. Haultain thought he could win on an anti-Ottawa stance that included anti-Catholic and anti-dualism biases. The idea that Ottawa and Quebec continued to meddle in western politics was a source of deep resentment to supporters of the Provincial Rights party, and Haultain believed that he could capitalize on it. No matter how strong the hope for a united British future was, western Canada had failed to escape the religious and linguistic battles that plagued central Canada throughout its history. The achievement of provincial status did little to eliminate these battles; on the contrary, they simply took on a new form that followed partisan lines. Haultain, for example, believed that Wilfrid Laurier's vision of minority rights, so narrowly thwarted by Clifford Sifton during the autonomy debates, was now

²⁰ *Canadian Annual Review*, 1905, 55-57.

²¹ *School Ordinance*, 1901, c. 29 (North-West Territories).

being carried out by the provincial branch of the Liberal party in Saskatchewan.²² The schools compromise of 1905, he charged, was proof of the West's colonial status and Liberal Party/Quebec/Franco-Catholic domination of western politics. Even provincial politics, Haultain charged, were not safe from outside influence.²³

For Francophones in Saskatchewan, however, the splitting of the language and schools question along partisan lines in 1905 was actually an improvement from the old days of territorial politics, when the lack of partisanship meant that French language rights were dealt with in a consensus-based and often anti-French manner.²⁴ Now the Liberal machine counted on francophone electoral support in ridings where the community had demographic importance and would have to take into consideration the community's views on separate schools and French language rights.²⁵ French-Canadian political leaders in the West and central Canada knew how flimsy constitutional guarantees were without the necessary population and political clout to enforce them; the best logical choice for protecting what little guarantees they had left was to publicly throw their support behind the Liberal party.

Early Fransaskois Political Organization in Saskatchewan (1905 to 1912)

But could francophones actually exert any influence over early politics in Saskatchewan? The provincial government did give consideration to the francophone community. William Ferdinand-Alphonse Turgeon, for example, was recruited as Attorney General in 1907.²⁶ A

²² The reality, of course, was much more complex. As is often the case with political compromises, nobody was completely happy with the schools arrangement that resulted from the autonomy bill debates; separate school rights under the 1901 *School Ordinance* were too much for militant Protestants, and they were too little for francophone Catholics.

²³ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 343-344.

²⁴ See first chapter. See also Brennan, "The 'Autonomy Question' and the Creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan."

²⁵ Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 21-25.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 57. The campaign leading up to Turgeon's election in 1907 showed the undercurrent of anti-Catholicism in Saskatchewan provincial politics, as Conservatives attempted to capitalize on the Protestant vote to beat Turgeon.

young francophone lawyer, Turgeon was raised in New Brunswick and New York. He understood the challenges facing francophone minorities in predominantly English-speaking societies, and his legal education in Quebec introduced him to contemporary ideas on dualism and French Canadian nationalism. Turgeon was a key link to the Francophone community and ensured its representation within the government.²⁷

In addition to political representation in the form of a prominent cabinet minister, the francophone community in Saskatchewan had other reasons to be optimistic. Francophone population growth was considerable during recent immigration to the region.

Table 2.1 Saskatchewan: Total Population and Population of "French Origin"²⁸

| Year | Total Population | French Origin (and % of total population) ²⁹ |
|------|------------------|---|
| 1901 | 93, 064 | 2,692 (2.9) |
| 1911 | 492, 432 | 23, 251 (4.7) |
| 1921 | 757, 510 | 42, 152 (5.6) |
| 1931 | 921, 785 | 50,700 (5.5) |

This increase in population was part of a third and final wave of francophone settlement in western Canada, when a number of French bloc settlements were established in the region.³⁰ The French-speaking clergy hoped that these settlements would serve to reinforce existing

²⁷ Turgeon was a key piece of the Liberal political machine in Saskatchewan until he left politics in 1921. See Dana Turgeon, "Turgeon, William Ferdinand-Alphonse," in Brett Quiring (ed.), *Saskatchewan Politicians: Lives Past and Present* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004), 233-234; Pierre Morissette, "W.-F.-A. Turgeon et la minorité francophone et catholique de la Saskatchewan, 1907-1921," in Richard Lapointe (ed.), *Perspectives sur la Saskatchewan française* (Regina: Société historique de la Saskatchewan, 1983), 155-164; Pierre Morissette, "La carrière politique de W.F.A. Turgeon, 1907-1921," Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Regina, 1975. For an account of the rise of pan-Canadian bilingualism as a French Canadian ideal, see A.I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997), 180-217.

²⁸ The latter category is the one used by the Canadian government. All figures are taken from Canada, *Census of Canada 1901*, vol. I, 392-402; *Census of Canada, 1911*, vol. II, 162 and 316; *Census of Canada, 1931*, vol. II; *Census of Canada 1931*, vol. XXII, 4-5.

²⁹ Does not include those listed as "Belgian" or from other French-speaking countries/nationalities. I have not included these numbers because Belgian and Swiss populations by origin are not differentiated by language.

³⁰ Alan B. Anderson, *Settling Saskatchewan* (Regina, University of Regina Press, 2013), 250.

francophone Métis communities where Catholic parishes and schools already existed, or to create new autonomous enclaves where the French language and Catholic faith could flourish. Settlement patterns were diverse in Saskatchewan; a considerable amount of francophone immigration came from European sources such as France, Belgium, and Switzerland, while French Canadians from Quebec and the United States made up the largest share of new arrivals. The effect of immigration on the social and political fabric of the region's existing francophone population was considerable.³¹

The francophone community in Saskatchewan experienced substantial population growth in absolute numbers. During the same era of settlement, however, the province also saw an explosion in general population, leaving the francophones as a small minority -- a position they continue to occupy to this day.³² A final disadvantage for political organization of francophones was the geographic distribution of settlements. The distance and isolation of pioneer settlement ensured that some francophone settlements could maintain a reasonable degree of autonomy, but the lack of concentrated francophone settlement made communication and organization difficult. Enclaves were established successfully in some areas. In Saskatchewan settlements were split almost evenly between the northern and southern halves of the province.³³

One area where francophones could boast of considerable demographic weight was the overall provincial Roman Catholic population.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 286. See also Robert Painchaud, "Les origines des peuplements de langue française dans l'Ouest canadien, 1870-1920: mythes et réalités," *Memoires de la Société royale du Canada*, série IV, tome XIII (1975), 69-81; André Lalonde, "L'immigration française et belge dans les Prairies canadiennes de 1870 à 1914," in *Perspectives sur la Saskatchewan française*, 47-66; Gratien Allaire, "La construction d'une culture française dans l'Ouest canadien: la diversité originelle," in Gérard Bouchard and Serge Courville (dirs.), *La construction d'une culture: Le Québec et l'Amérique française* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1993), 343-359.

³² According to the 2011 census of Canada, only 17,580 (1.7%) of people in Saskatchewan claim French as their mother tongue. Canada, Office of the Commission of Official Languages, *Figures on Official Languages by Province and Territory, 2011*.

³³ Gilles Viaud, "La géographie du peuplement francophone de l'Ouest," in Joseph Yvon Thériault (dir.), *Francophonies minoritaires au Canada: L'état des lieux* (Moncton: Éditions de l'Acadie, 1999), 77-96.

Table 2.2 Saskatchewan: Total Roman Catholic Population and Population of French Origin³⁴

| Year | Total Roman Catholic Population | Catholics of French Origin (%) ³⁵ |
|------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1901 | 17, 116 | 2,692 (15.7) |
| 1911 | 90, 092 | 23, 251 (25.8) |
| 1921 | 147, 342 | 42, 152 (28.6) |
| 1931 | 233, 979 | 44, 680 (19.2) |

The preponderance of French Canadians in the Catholic clergy in western Canada³⁶ also assured that Catholic mass would continue to be conducted in French in a number of communities and that the church hierarchy would help secure French education and political representation in the province. Thus, if francophone demography could not be brought to bear in the larger provincial political arena, the francophones could at least count on representation within the politically engaged church. Francophone prominence in Catholic institutions, however, did not preclude struggles with other communities. The Irish in particular did not share the Franco-Catholic ideal of Catholicism as an institution designed to protect the French language and French-Canadian culture. The place of the English language emerged as a major issue between Irish and French Catholics as the former group pushed for more English-speaking clergymen in western Canada based on the belief that English would be the main language of Canada.³⁷

³⁴ Canada, *Census of Canada 1901*, vol. I, 152-153 and 268, 272, and 278; *Census of Canada, 1911*, vol. II, 4-5 and 134-135. 1901 figures for Saskatchewan include Assiniboia East and Assiniboia West.

³⁵ All figures are taken from Canada, *Census of Canada 1901*, vol. I, 392-402; *Census of Canada, 1911*, vol. II, 162 and 316; and *Census of Canada, 1931*, vol. XXXV, 7-8.

³⁶ See Robert Painchaud, "Les exigences linguistiques dans le recrutement d'un clergé pour l'Ouest canadien, 1818-1920," *Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique, Sessions d'étude* (1975), 247-262. Fluency in both English and French was vital for clergy recruited to work in western Canada, but priests fluent in German, Ukrainian, Flemish, and other minority languages were also sought by the Catholic hierarchy.

³⁷ Raymond Huel, "The Irish-French Conflict in Catholic Episcopal Nominations: The Western Sees and the Struggle for Domination Within the Church," *CCHA Study Sessions* 42 (1975), 51-70; Cottrell, "The Irish in Saskatchewan, 1850-1930," 203; Cottrell, "John Joseph Leddy and the Battle for the Soul of the Catholic Church in

New francophone settlers helped revitalize the existing communities where French was used. The clergy acted immediately to capitalize on the increase in population. In Saskatchewan, however, lack of a newspaper and an effective provincial voice made political organization difficult for the francophone community. The initiative fell on the one group with a solid organizational structure, regular communications, and a shared vision -- the Franco-Catholic clergy. Under the leadership of Father A.-O Bérubé, Saskatchewan chapters of La Société Saint-Jean Baptiste organized a provincial congress in 1909. Delegates voted to unite all of the Saint-Jean Baptiste chapters of the province in order to form "La Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de la Saskatchewan." An executive committee was given the mandate of expanding the movement and creating a French language newspaper for the province.³⁸

Early in 1910 a number of priests, some of whom had arrived in Saskatchewan with the specific goal of establishing a French language newspaper, pooled \$10,000 and formed La compagnie de La Bonne Presse.³⁹ On 22 August 1910, Saskatchewan francophones got their first provincial newspaper when *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* published its first issue. Its slogan, "Notre Foi! Notre Langue!," left little question as to its origins and political vision.⁴⁰ Like *Le Courrier de l'Ouest* in Alberta⁴¹, *Le Patriote's* founders believed that the newspaper would give legitimacy to

the West," *CCHA Historical Studies* 61 (1995), 41-51; Brian Rainey, "The Fransaskois and the Irish Catholics: An Uneasy Relationship," *Prairie Forum* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999), 211-218.

³⁸ Raymond Huel, "La presse française dans l'Ouest canadien: *Le Patriote de l'Ouest*, 1910-1941," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 46, no. 4 (October-December 1976), 168.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁴⁰ This connection was an explicit one for most francophone political leaders across Canada. As Archbishop Mathieu wrote to Henri Bourassa, "Voilà pourquoi nous avons fait tant de sacrifices pour garder cette belle langue française, ce diamant d'un prix inestimable, cette œuvre d'art travaillée par les siècles, d'une beauté à nulle autre possible. Nous apprenons l'anglais, cette langue dans laquelle on trafique, dont on se sert en voyage, en négoce, en affaires, mais pour prier, pour adorer, nous nous servons de la langue française que nous avons bégayée sur les genoux de nos bonnes mères chrétiennes." Quoted in Huel, "Mgr. Olivier-Elzéar Mathieu: Guardian of French Catholic Interests in Saskatchewan," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 42, no. 3 (1972), 316.

⁴¹ "À Nos Lecteurs," *Le Courrier de l'Ouest*, 14 octobre 1905, 2.

the idea of a bilingual Canada and historically-rooted language rights in the region.⁴² The newspaper expressed solidarity for French speakers in all of western Canada, since "la cause" in Saskatchewan resembled what was happening in Alberta and Manitoba. *Le Patriote* also vowed to recall the importance of history and the memory of the early days of French in the West. For proponents of French language rights, this history was crucial to remember because it represented the foundation of dualism in the region.

Founding the Association catholique franco-canadienne (ACFC), 1912

The dominance of separate schools as a political issue in western Canada played an important role in encouraging political organization of the region's francophones.⁴³ Danger was never far as separate schools remained on the provincial political agenda. In 1912, for example, the Saskatchewan Conservatives blamed their loss in provincial election on the Catholic church campaigning against their party.⁴⁴ As long as anti-Catholic rhetoric continued to be a regular occurrence in provincial politics, the francophone community feared outbreaks of majority Protestant anger against its religion and language.⁴⁵ Most community members and leaders agreed that the best defense for the French language and culture was its perpetuation through education. Politics was, for the most part, a lost cause. The community could influence the outcome of elections in constituencies where francophones enjoyed numerical strength, but there

⁴² "Par ailleurs, le titre de notre journal proclame assez haut que nous voulons servir nos concitoyens de langue française dans l'Ouest. Nous les défendrons quand ils seront attaqués. Nous réclamerons leur droit de vivre honorablement dans le pays qu'ont découvert leurs pères. Avant tout, nous nous attacherons à contribuer de tout notre pouvoir à la conservation de leur belle langue, à laquelle les traités les plus solennels ont assuré la même légalité qu'à la langue anglaise." "Notre programme," *Le Patriote de l'Ouest*, August 22 1910, 5.

⁴³ Lalonde, "The French Canadians of the West: Hope, Tragedy, Uncertainty," 111.

⁴⁴ Huel, "La survivance in Saskatchewan," 52.

⁴⁵ In Manitoba for example the Association d'éducation des Canadiens français du Manitoba (AECFM) in 1916 following new provincial government restrictions on French-language instruction. The organization became the community's current provincial francophone organization in 1982, the Société franco-manitobaine (SFM). Lalonde, "The French Canadians of the West: Hope, Tragedy, Uncertainty," 111.

could be no "French" government in Saskatchewan. Having Turgeon as a francophone cabinet minister was as much as anyone could hope for. Turgeon, ever faithful to the local francophone community, continued to show his friendship in a number of ways. He awarded *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* Liberal patronage in the form of advertising and printing contracts.⁴⁶ Turgeon also ensured that the government's interpretation of the *School Act* in 1912, which allowed a primary course in French, would not be contested.⁴⁷

The community needed a concerted effort to establish, staff, maintain, and administer French-language teaching in schools. The church could not carry the task on its own, and aside from the newly reorganised provincial chapters of La Société Saint-Jean Baptiste and La Société du Parler français in Saskatchewan⁴⁸, no province-wide francophone organisation existed. Both societies were founded and based in Quebec which prompted some western Canadian francophones to question their appropriateness in a western Canadian context.⁴⁹ The impetus for a homegrown francophone political organization was now clear: secular political leadership would aid the clergy on the schools portfolio, and effective political organization would take into account the particular social and political needs of francophones in Saskatchewan.

In February 1912, 450 delegates from across Saskatchewan⁵⁰ met at Duck Lake to discuss the founding of a Saskatchewan chapter of La Société du Parler Français. Delegates were divided, however, on strategy and structure. Members of the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de la

⁴⁶ Huel, "La presse française dans l'Ouest canadien," 170. As Walter Scott himself noted, Liberal patronage of non-English newspapers was common since they were "an essential adjunct to our party organization" and assured the loyalty of various voting blocs across the province. Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 130.

⁴⁷ Huel, "The French Canadians and the Language Question, 1918," 12. The primary course (or grade one) question may seem trivial, but it was actually of fundamental importance in school policy because of simple demographics: in Saskatchewan, for example, half of all pupils were in grade one during the 1916-1917 school year. See Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 347.

⁴⁸ See France Levasseur-Ouimet, *D'année en année de 1659 à 2000: Une présentation synchronique des événements historiques franco-albertains* (Edmonton: Institut du patrimoine, Faculté Saint-Jean, 2000), 90-91.

⁴⁹ Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 209-210.

⁵⁰ Among the delegates was Minister Turgeon, who gave a speech on the legal status of French in Saskatchewan. See Janique Dubois, "Le projet politique fransaskois: Cent ans d'existence," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 46, no. 2 (2014), 102-103.

Saskatchewan preferred expanding their own group to founding a new one. Others argued that the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste was too focused on Québécois settlers and French Canadians, poorly suited to the specific challenges posed by western Canada, and had little significance for European francophones.⁵¹ Thus, in June 1912, one month before the Saskatchewan provincial election, members convened again and founded the Association Franco-Canadienne de la Saskatchewan (AFC). Members chose "Franco-Canadienne" rather than "Canadienne-française" because they believed that the name was more inclusive of European francophones and offered a more accurate reflection of the diverse origins of the province's French-speaking population.⁵² Catholic influence in the AFC was reaffirmed during the organization's second congress in 1913 when it changed its name to the Association Catholique Franco-Canadienne de la Saskatchewan (ACFC).⁵³

Province-wide organization yielded results. The ACFC now had opportunities for alliances and partnerships with other cultural minorities. Representatives of the German Catholic association *Deutsche Katholische Volksverein*, for example, were present at the ACFC congress in 1913 and stated their commitment to standing "shoulder to shoulder" alongside francophones in order to defend separate schools.⁵⁴ This partnership was very much a western Canadian necessity. Well outnumbered by the Anglo-Saxon majority, it was important for minority groups to know who they could count on as political allies. Indeed, although the francophones viewed themselves as distinct from other minority groups because of their history, they were not above working with others in order to advance their cause.

⁵¹ Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 209-210.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 212-213.

⁵⁴ Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 164.

The early political actions of the Saskatchewan francophone community are notable for several reasons. The new French-speaking settlers, while sharing linguistic, religious, and even cultural traits with the settled French Canadians, did not share their history. Immigrant francophones were thrown into an uncertain social, geographic, and political context that bore little resemblance to the places they had left behind. European francophones who joined the drive for political organization and *la survivance* were, however, guided by the French Canadian clergy to adopt a political cause that was characteristically French Canadian.⁵⁵

Francophones in Saskatchewan could also count on the existing francophone footprint in the region from the territorial days. No other minority group could say the same for itself. All minorities, including the francophones, shared the pressures of assimilation and feared the tyranny of the majority, but the francophones were the only minority who could look to the past for support.⁵⁶ Furthermore, unlike other minority groups in Saskatchewan, the francophones could count on the political support of Quebec, especially during the early 20th century when ardent nationalist Henri Bourassa's vision of a pan-Canadian French Canada was popular among many of his compatriots.⁵⁷ Quebec may have let western francophones down by not sending many immigrants west during the territorial period, but the regional clergy maintained an aggressive and energetic mentality in favour of French education and language rights.⁵⁸ In many

⁵⁵ The same can also be said for British Canadian immigrants from Ontario, who also inherited older debates over the cultural, social, and symbolic character of western Canada which were still being settled. See chapter one.

⁵⁶ Of course, not all western Canadians shared the idea that the French language had a rooted past in the region. An example of how distant French and English speaking Canadians in the West differed in their views on French in regional history are the writings of Professor Edmund H. Oliver, University of Saskatchewan's first Professor of History. Oliver argued that the French language had no real history in the region, that it was nothing more than another minority language, and that it had never been an official language in the North-West Territories. See Oliver, *The Country School in Non-English Communities in Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon, Saturday Press and Prairie Farm, no date), 7-18.

⁵⁷ Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 192-193*; see also Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*.

⁵⁸ Even in Quebec, major efforts were underway to help francophone minorities outside of the province by promoting political awareness of their plight. The new magazine *L'Action française*, for example, co-founded in 1920 by Father Lionel Groulx, helped promote francophone solidarity across the country. See Michel Bock, A

ways, then, the creation of the ACFC in Saskatchewan was a quintessentially "western Canadian" event: it combined the newness of a different and challenging socio-political environment, and new settlers and cultures with the weight of history, older traditions, and established institutional structures/models.

A "Wedge for Bilingualism": French and Education During the First World War

The founding of the ACFC was timely, as the organization would soon be needed to defend francophones against a number of threats. British Canadian nationalism was on the rise⁵⁹, movements for direct democracy were gaining in popularity⁶⁰, temperance was at a fever pitch⁶¹, and Canada was at war. The First World War was a transformative event for western Canada. It exacerbated many of the existing issues and tensions, including the language and separate school questions.⁶² In Saskatchewan, political leaders appealed for unity in order to win the war, but it did not take long before suspicion of minorities gripped the politics of the province.⁶³ Many Anglo-Canadian political leaders believed that the existing legislation, which granted only

Nation Beyond Borders: Lionel Groulx on French-Canadian Minorities (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014), 113-114.

⁵⁹ As an example, a 1913 amendment to the *School Act* which required minority and majority ratepayers to support their respective schools enraged Protestants across Saskatchewan, and the Orange Lodge promised to make separate schools the principal issue during the next provincial election. Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 261-262. See also *Act to Amend the School Act, 1913-1913*, c. 35 (Saskatchewan), s. 3.

⁶⁰ From 1912 to 1913 a number of farmer's organizations and the Direct Legislation League supported the introduction of the *Direct Legislation Act*, which was adopted but subsequently repealed by the Saskatchewan Legislature. The ACFC and German Catholics opposed the legislation, fearing that both francophones and Germans would be subject to the "fanaticism of the majority." Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 238-253.

⁶¹ The Catholic hierarchy in Saskatchewan did not explicitly support temperance, but Archbishop Mathieu promised that he would help with the cause in any way he could. More generally, the francophone communities in both Saskatchewan and Alberta disliked the temperance movement since it was nationalistic and had links to the anti-Catholic schools movement. Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 260; see also Duff Crerar, "Enthusiasm Embattled: 1916 and the Great War," in *Alberta Formed, Alberta Transformed*, 391.

⁶² John Herd Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1978) and Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 348. In Manitoba, the Laurier-Greenway compromise was abolished in 1916, and English became the sole language of instruction in the province's schools. See Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français*, Tome II, Le temps des outrages (1870-1916), 333-368.

⁶³ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 294-296.

piecemeal rights to non-English speakers, was too much; schools were not doing their job of assimilating the non-British population.⁶⁴

During the war, French-language education was a politically explosive issue. A brief example serves to illustrate this point. In 1915 the government moved to update the *School Act*. The proposed amendment would allow school boards to hire full-time teachers who were competent in languages other than English. This change would help boards save money by allowing them to pay for just one teacher rather than a teacher and a language instructor. The government believed that it was helping boards that did not want to employ extra staff to teach minority language courses.⁶⁵ The conservative-leaning press understood the amendment much differently. Interpreted as a "Wedge for Bi-lingualism", it would allow non-English majorities in some school districts to hire teachers of their own nationalities, nothing less than a "dastardly attack upon the public school system."⁶⁶ Premier Walter Scott subsequently withdrew the amendment as opposition to it intensified. In 1916, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities all adopted resolutions condemning the use of "foreign languages," including French, in Saskatchewan's schools.⁶⁷

1917 was the war's pivotal year in both regional and national politics. By 1917, popular opinion towards minorities was hostile in Saskatchewan. The new *School Attendance Act* made primary school compulsory as the Liberals hoped to quiet anger surrounding minority

⁶⁴ See Raymond Huel, "The Public School as A Guardian of Anglo-Saxon Traditions: The Saskatchewan Experience, 1913-1918," in Martin L. Kovacs, *Ethnic Canadians: Culture and Education* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1978), 295-300; see also Marilyn Barber, "Canadianization Through the Schools of the Prairie Provinces Before World War I: The Attitudes and Aims of the English-Speaking Majority," in *Ibid.*, 281-294.

⁶⁵ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 294-296.

⁶⁶ *Evening Province*, May 26 1915.

⁶⁷ Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 218.

education.⁶⁸ Schools, race, and assimilation were the key issues as Saskatchewan prepared for a provincial election. Many British Canadians could not tolerate their "sons fighting for British institutions while foreigners were perpetuating their national languages in Saskatchewan schools."⁶⁹ The Loyal Orange Lodge No. 267 of Prince Albert, for example, submitted questionnaires -- entitled "One School, One Language, One Flag" -- to all candidates, asking whether or not they favoured separate schools. The Order also pledged its support to any candidate who favoured eliminating "sectarianism," regardless of party affiliation. The wording used by the Lodge illustrated the Orange Order's beliefs on bilingualism in Saskatchewan:

Are you prepared to resist any special privileges being granted to any section of the population of Saskatchewan either on account of race or religion? Are you opposed to all bilingual teachings in the schools of the Province and in favour of placing the French language on the same footing as other foreign languages? Are you in favour of a law providing that all School Trustees must be able to read and write in the English language?⁷⁰

The Liberals, not wanting to alienate their electoral supporters but also aware of anti-minority sentiment, promised that all children would be given a sufficient knowledge of English in schools but that true friends of the British Empire should not appeal to intolerance and racial discrimination.⁷¹ The plan worked and the Liberals returned to the legislature with an increased majority.

The June election, however, did not settle outstanding social and political issues in Saskatchewan, in particular the festering language and school questions. On the contrary, it made things worse. The 1917 Saskatchewan election, provincial Conservatives informed Prime Minister Robert Borden, was lost because too many British Canadians were overseas fighting in

⁶⁸ *School Attendance Act*, 1917 c. 19 (Saskatchewan).

⁶⁹ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 60; Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 61-62.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Robin, *Shades of Right*, 295.

⁷¹ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 368.

the war.⁷² Their absence left "foreigners," Catholics, and French Canadians to re-elect the Liberal party. Conservatives knew for example that Father Louis-Pierre Gravel, a Quebec-born priest and founder of the Gravelbourg settlement in southern Saskatchewan, promised to have every French Canadian in that part of the province vote Liberal.⁷³ One possible solution to this problem, the Saskatchewan Conservatives recommended, was disenfranchising non-British and non-allied citizens. Several months later Borden introduced the *War Time Elections Act*, which stripped all "enemy aliens" of the right to vote who had not been in the country since 1904.⁷⁴ William Turgeon thought the law was repulsive, not least because it threatened the party's electoral base and "'outraged' the spirit of Confederation."⁷⁵

National politics also left Saskatchewan's francophones increasingly vulnerable as the conscription debate polarized the country.⁷⁶ Most western Canadians were torn between their anger against Borden's Conservatives for campaigning against reciprocity in 1911⁷⁷ and their loyalty to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who gave Saskatchewan provincial autonomy and favoured reciprocity but now appeared to be pandering to Quebec's anti-conscription stance. Western views on federal politics quickly split on cultural and linguistic lines. Laurier's position was simply unacceptable to the majority of British Canadians in western Canada, even those who considered themselves political moderates. Quebec's position against conscription was a vote cast against the Canadian nation and against the Empire. This offensive political vision simply could not be reproduced on the Prairies under any circumstances, especially not during such a

⁷² Unnamed correspondent to Robert Borden, "Memorandum re: Saskatchewan Provincial Elections," in J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1977), 71-72.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁷⁵ Turgeon to Laurier, 11 September 1917, quoted in Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 62.

⁷⁶ See for example Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*; Thompson, *The Harvests of War*.

⁷⁷ See for example W.L. Morton, *The Progressive Party in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1950).

calamitous war.⁷⁸ The conscription crisis confirmed to western Canadians that the francophones in Canada could not be trusted. By the time of the December election, westerners had made up their minds: they would have to vote for Borden's Union government. The federal Liberals did not support conscription. Western Canadians favoured conscription, and they believed that voting Liberal would be allowing French Canada to dictate the entire nation's position on the issue.⁷⁹

Saskatchewan francophones were ambivalent towards conscription. Many who retained cultural, social, and political affinities with France and Belgium readily joined the war either for Canada or their home countries. Yet they also opposed conscription, especially the way in which the federal government went about getting public approval for it. In a heated letter to W.F.A. Turgeon, for example, Father P.E. Myre, a founder of *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* and strong defender of francophone rights in Saskatchewan, denounced the Saskatchewan Liberals who supported conscription. It was, Myre fumed, "une acte de trahison au Canada et à Laurier."⁸⁰ In the end Borden won the bitterly-contested federal election with massive support in Saskatchewan.⁸¹

The angry atmosphere generated by the 1917 conscription election fuelled discontentment with the language and schools questions. Revenge against French speakers soon became a rallying point for British Canadians of different political stripes in Saskatchewan. Eliminating French and Catholicism in schools was viewed as the first step in dealing with other problems facing the province.⁸² As with conscription, British Canadians in the West viewed language and schools as more than narrow political questions. They were linked to fundamental

⁷⁸ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 62.

⁷⁹ Thompson, *Harvests of War*, 115-116.

⁸⁰ Myre to Turgeon, 2 July 1917. Quoted in Thompson, *Harvests of War*, 117.

⁸¹ Saskatchewan did not return a single Laurier Liberal to office, while Alberta elected just one.

⁸² Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 401 and Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 61.

beliefs on how the political community ought to be constructed.⁸³ The war awakened an already nascent suspicion of the "other" in Saskatchewan western society; the conscription crisis in particular reaffirmed to British Canadians the dangers posed to their vision of western Canada by francophones. Reverend Murdoch MacKinnon, who already disagreed publicly with Premier Walter Scott over separate schools and language on a number of occasions during the war⁸⁴, summed up the British Canadian position: "French must go. Quebec failed us in the war. We do not want Quebec reproduced in Saskatchewan...Let all enlightened citizens speak, write, and wire until French goes with German."⁸⁵

As the war entered its final year, public clamour for educational reform grew louder and could no longer be ignored. In 1918, when the new legislative session opened, Premier W.M. Martin presented draft amendments to the *School Act* to cabinet. All classes would be taught in English, and no other language could be taught within school hours with the exception of French for one hour a day.⁸⁶ W.R. Motherwell, who held the Agriculture portfolio since 1905, resigned from cabinet immediately. The *School Act* amendments were, he wrote Laurier, "the last straw"⁸⁷ in Martin's appeasement of Saskatchewan's anti-francophone movement. The bill was completely unacceptable, Motherwell argued, since it would take away the teaching of French in grade one. Saskatchewan could now boast that it was giving fewer rights to its francophones than "rabid mad" Ontario.⁸⁸ Turgeon almost followed Motherwell. As a French Canadian, he was not only

⁸³ Huel, "The French Canadians and the Language Question, 1918," 5.

⁸⁴ See Gordon Barnhart, *Peace, Progress, and Prosperity: A Biography of Saskatchewan's First Premier, T. Walter Scott* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2000), 141.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 418.

⁸⁶ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 65.

⁸⁷ Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 121. Motherwell was already angry with Martin over his stance on the Union government.

⁸⁸ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 65.

opposed to the amendments, but personally offended by them.⁸⁹ He decided to stay only because Archbishop Mathieu convinced him that the first year of French instruction could be sacrificed in order to keep a francophone representative in cabinet.⁹⁰ In any case, Turgeon's resignation would have likely been unnecessary since Motherwell's resignation had some effect on Martin. The provision eliminating French in grade one was removed from the bill. English would remain the sole language of instruction in schools, but French would be permitted in grade one and could be studied as a subject for one hour per day in all other grades.⁹¹

The legislative debate on the new *School Act* demonstrates how provincial leaders in Saskatchewan viewed the status of French in Canadian and western Canadian history at the time. Martin defended the new bill, arguing that it did nothing more than codify the tradition of granting limited concessions to French speakers passed down by legislation in the North-West Territories. He was careful to remind the assembly that the legislation gave nothing more than "privileges," not rights, to French speakers.⁹² Martin argued in his speech, however, that it was also important to recognize that francophones were special among the minority groups:

To my mind to treat the French people in the same law as you treat all the other peoples who have come to this country and treat them all in the same way would be to deal very unfairly with the French people (Hear, hear)...One must take into consideration the historical position of these people in Canada and be prepared to deal with them in a fair and just manner...The French language in this country occupies altogether a different position from the language of people who come here from other countries.⁹³

⁸⁹ David E. Smith argues that Premier Martin knew that Motherwell and Turgeon would oppose the amendments, but because he needed to consolidate his power over the party, went ahead with them anyways. The language question provided an excellent test for cabinet solidarity. Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 120.

⁹⁰ Huel, "The French Canadians and the Language Question, 1918," 12. Mathieu deplored the situation as arising from Anglo-Saxon ignorance and lack of historical knowledge of the French presence in the region. See Huel, "Mgr. Olivier-Elzéar Mathieu."

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹² "The Language Question before the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan: Official Hansard Report of the Debate on Bill No. 31, 'An Act to Amend the School Act', December 19th, 1918," *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* (Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, 1919), 28-29.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 29. It should be noted here that Martin's reference to "this country" denotes western Canada, not Canada generally.

Motherwell, pleased that Martin had withdrawn the most offensive sections of the bill, explained that it would have been "a tremendous blunder" to take away the French language in schools since it was part of the Saskatchewan's history and made no sense at a time when "France and Great Britain are being thrown into each others arms more and more as a result of the world's war and the outgrowth thereof."⁹⁴ Motherwell argued that the question of the French language could not be viewed parochially. Provincial, national, and international contexts had to be considered, and the place of French in the West went beyond the region itself. It had major political implications for Canada as a nation. With the Liberal caucus supporting the bill, it passed easily even though the government had to vote down an Opposition amendment to completely abolish French as a language of instruction.⁹⁵

Martin's defense of the new *School Act* did little to pacify opposition to French language instruction in Saskatchewan. Many people were simply unwilling to accept the Premier's argument that French "privileges" had any place in the province. Both the *Regina Daily Post* and *Saskatoon Daily Star* argued that the compromise over French was not enough, and that French should be banned from public schools along with all other "foreign" languages.⁹⁶ The francophone community, led by Archbishop Mathieu and the ACFC, opted against full-on confrontation with the government and more militant British groups. Mathieu, in particular,

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁹⁵ Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 123. Section 177 of the *School Act* reads as follows: "(1) Except as hereinafter provided, English shall be the sole language of instruction in all schools and no language other than English shall be taught during school hours. (2) Where it is necessary in the case of French-speaking pupils, by reason of their being unable to understand the English language, French may be used as the language of instruction, but such use of French shall not be continued beyond grade 1, and in the case of any child, shall not be continued beyond the first year of such child's attendance at school. (3) When the board of any district passes a resolution to that effect the French language may be taught as a subject for a period not exceeding one hour in each day as a part of the school curriculum, and such teaching shall consist of French reading, French grammar and French composition. (2) Where the French language is being taught under the provisions of subsection (2) or (3) hereof, any pupils in the schools who do not desire to receive such instruction shall be profitably employed in other school work while such instruction is being given." *Act to Amend the School Act*, 1918-1919, c. 48 (Saskatchewan), s. 14.

⁹⁶ Huel, "The French Canadians and the Language Question, 1918," 13.

preferred to work behind the scenes in order to avoid stirring up anti-French sentiment.⁹⁷ As a leader he eschewed grandiose gestures and political grandstanding.⁹⁸ The ACFC, for its part, mounted a promotional campaign about francophone linguistic and educational aspirations. The ACFC also created l'Association Interprovinciale in order to help with recruiting French-speaking teachers from Ontario and Quebec for the province's schools.⁹⁹ Finally, the ACFC created an organization for francophone school trustees, l'Association des Commissaires d'Écoles Franco-Canadiennes (ACEFC).¹⁰⁰ Founded as a result of the anti-francophone rhetoric heard during the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association (SSTA) congress in 1918, the ACEFC sought to support and train new teachers of French in the province and encourage the study of French.¹⁰¹ The ACFC approach sought pragmatism above all by working with government.

The debate over schools and the French language in 1918 demonstrated that the francophones were outsiders to the political community and like other minorities.¹⁰² By portraying francophones as Quebecers, anti-francophone advocates could argue that the French language had no place in the West and should remain restricted to Quebec. Admitting that French Canadians as a people had a history in western Canada was not an option. Those francophones in the West that fought for schools were seen by British Canadian nationalists as either foreigners undermining the ascendancy of British institutions, or Quebecers hampering the war effort.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁸ Lapointe et Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 218-219. Mathieu's strategy did not mean that he was not a highly competent leader; there are many indications that he was highly respected across Canada. During the 1917 conscription crisis, for example, Mathieu was called on by the federal government to visit Quebec and help calm the various sides surrounding the political question. See also Huel's brief study on Mathieu's education and political life, "Mgr. Olivier-Elzéar Mathieu: Guardian of French Catholic Interests in Saskatchewan."

⁹⁹ Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 215.

¹⁰⁰ Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 90.

¹⁰¹ Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens*, 215. The shortage of qualified French teachers was particularly acute at the time.

¹⁰² In the most extreme cases, French Canadians were seen as allied with the enemy. See Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 353.

A British Province: Mobilising Against French After the War, 1918-1925

The end of the First World War did not spell the end of the controversy over separate schools and French as a language of instruction.¹⁰³ War propaganda, nationalism, suspicion of foreigners, and distrust of Quebec and French Canadians meant that a renewed battle over language was just beginning. A growing chorus of well-organized militant groups, dedicated to making western Canada British, steadfastly refused to forget Quebec's resolute opposition to conscription and vowed to take revenge for it.

The 1920s in western Canada were years when debates over identity dominated provincial politics. Feelings of regional discontent were at a new high. The French language in particular remained a crucial rallying point for many British Canadian groups since it carried with it a number of grinding questions of political controversy: separate schools and the role of Catholicism in provincial education systems, assimilation of minorities and the teaching of languages other than English, and the role of Quebec in national and regional politics. Quebec in particular was the source of much fear and resentment. British Canadians refused to allow Quebec to reproduce itself as a society in western Canada.¹⁰⁴ Ironically, Quebecers also believed that they had little influence on the outcome of western Canadian events. Father Lionel Groulx, one of French Canada's leading intellectuals, lamented that western francophones "no longer know what is meant by the old province of Quebec because our intellectual and spiritual influence hardly extends beyond our borders."¹⁰⁵ Leading intellectuals in Quebec worried that

¹⁰³ The immediate postwar years featured continuity for a number of major movements, especially reform. More and more people wanted to see the state intervene in key areas such as prohibition. See John Herd Thompson, "'The Beginning of Our Regeneration': The Great War and Western Canadian Reform Movements," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* (1972), 227-245.

¹⁰⁴ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 78.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Bock, *A Nation Beyond Borders*, 109.

the agrarian revolt, burgeoning regional sentiment in the West, and the popularity of the Progressive party in western Canada could even lead to the breakup of Canada.¹⁰⁶

The war reawakened British Canadian ethnic nationalism in the West. By the early 1920s many British Canadians regarded immigration and cultural diversity as a hindrance to the province's future.¹⁰⁷ This belief was well represented by George Exton Lloyd, the Anglican Bishop of Saskatchewan who first came to the West in 1885 as a young soldier to defend the region from the "disloyal" Métis. In a speech to the Grand Orange Lodge of British North America, Lloyd deplored the "mongrel" Canada being created in the West.¹⁰⁸ Lloyd never passed up an opportunity to denounce diversity and proclaim the true character of the West. Immigration, Lloyd argued, was compromising Saskatchewan's British character: "The real question at stake is not whether these people can grow potatoes, but whether you would like your daughter or granddaughter to marry them, that is, will they develop into good loyal citizens of Canada and the Empire?."¹⁰⁹ Like Lloyd, many British Canadians feared that years of mass immigration were undermining educational and political institutions and advocated for a fundamental re-evaluation of the assumptions undergirding Canadian immigration policy.¹¹⁰

Attorney General Turgeon, with his extensive political experience in Saskatchewan, sensed an incoming storm. He informed Archbishop Mathieu that a new anti-French and anti-Catholic wave would likely hit provincial politics and ignite new controversies by focusing on bilingual teachers, schools located in convents, and members of religious orders such as nuns being employed as teachers.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

¹⁰⁷ Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 231-232.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Chris Kitzen, "Preaching Purity in the Promised Land: Bishop Lloyd and the Immigration Debate," in *The Prairie West As Promised Land*, 301.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 249.

¹¹⁰ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 688-690.

¹¹¹ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 79-80.

Where can the source of discontentment against francophones and Catholics be located in historiography? Earlier studies of western Canadian political history interpret political movements against francophones as marginal or extremist outbursts in an otherwise new and multicultural society.¹¹² In the case of Alberta, for example, western Canadian historian Howard Palmer argued that the place of French Canadians in prairie society "does not appear to have been of great concern to Albertans in the first half-century of the province's existence."¹¹³ More recently, however, historians have looked more closely at debates over "Britishness" in early western Canada and concluded that multiculturalism was more myth than reality¹¹⁴, that xenophobia was widespread¹¹⁵, and that groups such as the Ku Klux Klan were not marginal, but important participants in a major debate over the definition of Britishness and political community in western Canadian society.¹¹⁶ As political scientist and historian Martin Robin argues,

What livened the public mind in Saskatchewan, in the late 1920s, to 'things as they were' was an accumulation of fears and prejudices assiduously cultivated during previous decades by assorted guardians of public morality. The Ku Klux Klan did not invent prejudice in Saskatchewan. It was already there in abundance, rooted in groups and processes -- economic, social, and political -- perceived as threatening to the status and power of native, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Saskatchewanians.¹¹⁷

Discrimination against minorities was not marginal to western Canadian society during the 1920s. Rather, it was central to political and social discourse. As historian James Pitsula also argued, the racism of the KKK differed little from what many people in Saskatchewan thought

¹¹² See for example Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982); Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan"; Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan."

¹¹³ Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 12.

¹¹⁴ Waiser, "The Myth of Multiculturalism in Early Saskatchewan."

¹¹⁵ See especially "Absolute Perfection," in Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 231-253.

¹¹⁶ James M. Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

¹¹⁷ Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Native and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992), 50.

about non-British minorities during the 1920s.¹¹⁸ The Klan shared overlapping agendas and members with a number of different groups, and in Saskatchewan its peak membership of about 25-30,000 rivalled that of major organizations such as the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association (35,000).¹¹⁹

A number of organizations and political groups addressed the foreigner question in Saskatchewan. They ranged from moderate (farm and labour organizations), militant (Protestant church groups and the Royal Canadian Legion) to extreme (the Orange Order¹²⁰, National Association of Canada, Ku Klux Klan) in their views.¹²¹ All agreed that the status quo was unacceptable and that the core value of assimilating minorities, brought to the forefront of Saskatchewan politics during the Great War, must not be forgotten. The French Canadians were the principal enemy on the front line of this troublesome issue because they had a special status that other minority groups did not. They represented what the Saskatchewan political community would not accept: official recognition of minorities in the region. Moreover, Saskatchewan francophones' political and cultural connections to Quebec stirred Protestant fears of Rome and Quebec exerting political control over the destiny of western Canada.¹²²

Protestant leaders were the among first to speak out against the French language and French education.¹²³ University of Saskatchewan Professor Edmund H. Oliver argued that

¹¹⁸ Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 33.

¹¹⁹ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 708.

¹²⁰ The Order saw considerable growth in its membership since Saskatchewan's founding; between 1905 and 1920, over 230 lodges were established, and by 1920 its membership based hovered around 12,000 people. See Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 107.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹²² Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 72 and 78.

¹²³ It should be observed that Protestant thought in western Canada was undergoing a major shift which coincided with debates over schools. The rise of the Social Gospel sought spiritual and societal redemption not by reforming the individual soul, but the social context surrounding individuals. The milieu or environment had to be reformed, immigrants assimilated, and capitalism revolutionized in order to bring about the Kingdom of God. Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 350; see also Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel as the Religion of Agrarian Revolt," in Robert C. Brown and Ramsay Cook (eds.), *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton* (Toronto,

immediate action bolstering national schools was necessary in order to prevent the province from becoming another "polyglot Austria."¹²⁴ Reverend S.P. Rondeau, a francophone and United Church minister, was one of the more colourful Protestant figures and a member of the KKK. He argued that anywhere the francophone Catholics formed a considerable part of the population in Saskatchewan, the rights of Protestants were ignored.¹²⁵ Rondeau argued that francophones in western Canada would stop at nothing to achieve bilingualism and a dual French-English society outside of Quebec. He also believed that they had a powerful ally in the federal government, where Quebec MPs exerted considerable influence. Others saw the link to Quebec as a sinister francophone plan to force bilingualism on the West. When the Anglican Church learned that the federal government was using Roman Catholic priests in order to help bring francophone immigration from Quebec to Saskatchewan, it denounced the scheme as a plan to turn Saskatchewan into a bilingual province. Other troubling signs were that federal forms were being made available in both English and French, and individuals were being told that they could use French when addressing certain government departments.¹²⁶

Agitation against francophone education soon reached a boiling point. Reverend Rondeau railed against public schools in francophone Catholic communities such as Gravelbourg and Ferland, where teaching was conducted in convents and by nuns, even though there were no complaints from ratepayers.¹²⁷ In the Ethier School District, a lone Protestant ratepayer complained that the school was little more than a Catholic chapel and that provincial law was

McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 174-186 and J.S. Woodsworth, *My Neighbour: A Study of City Conditions, A Plea for Social Service* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1972 [1911]).

¹²⁴ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 55.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹²⁶ Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 131-132.

¹²⁷ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 82-84.

being flouted by the francophones who were teaching French "from morning to night."¹²⁸ These educational arrangements were completely unacceptable to groups like the Orange Lodge¹²⁹, who denounced them as pandering to francophones by unscrupulous politicians who were giving Saskatchewan francophones rights that they did not deserve.¹³⁰

To Saskatchewan francophones, it was painfully obvious that the old Liberal politics of minority accommodation had changed, especially since the end of the war. William Turgeon resigned in 1921 to accept a judicial appointment; he was the oldest member of the Liberal government and with his departure, Catholics and the francophone community lost their main cabinet representative. Premier Martin, whose feelings towards the francophone community were ambivalent, assumed responsibility of the Attorney-General portfolio.¹³¹ Another troubling sign was the government's new approach to education. The 1918 *School Act* still permitted some education in French but placed it at the discretion of school boards. The government refused to create a French curriculum or provide French language resources.¹³² The Department of Education increased its oversight and inspection of schools in francophone communities and undertook a number of investigations into British Protestant allegations of abuse.¹³³ Moreover, the Minister of Education refused to appoint bilingual inspectors for school boards where French was being taught. Francophones inspectors were assigned to English schools while

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 84. See also Huel, "The Teaching of French in Saskatchewan Public Schools: A Curious Infraction of the Provisions of the School Act in Ethier S.D. No. 1834, 1921-1923," *Saskatchewan History* 24, no. 1 (1971).

¹²⁹ Outside of Ontario, the largest number of Lodge members was in Saskatchewan. The group held an important place in provincial politics during the 1920s and 1930s, and had close links to the Conservative party in terms of ideology. *Ibid.*, 87. See also Houston, *The Sash Canada Wore*.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹³¹ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 503.

¹³² Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 90. Alberta's francophones had similar problems with curriculum and overworked primary teachers. See Yvette Mahé, "La transmission culturelle par le *curriculum*: le cas des Albertains francophones, 1892-1940," in *La production culturelle en milieu minoritaire* (Saint-Boniface: CEFCO, 1994), 147-159.

¹³³ The complaints themselves were actually minimal, and only dealt with a dozen schools out of 4, 776 in Saskatchewan. Nonetheless, they were enough to serve as political capital for opponents of immigration, French language rights, and Catholic schools. See Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 251.

predominantly French-speaking communities like Bellevue and Domrémy had to make do with hostile unilingual anglophone inspectors.¹³⁴

The francophone community changed its activism strategy in 1925. That year, morale was low at the ACFC when Raymond Denis took up leadership of the organization. Denis was an able and intelligent man, already well known in the francophone community for his confidence, leadership, and political astuteness.¹³⁵ He took the ACFC in a new direction, preferring action, audacity, and even open confrontation to the behind-the-scenes lobbying still favoured by some members of the clergy. The francophones, Denis argued, must meet their adversaries in battle rather than fear them. This new approach focused on public visibility and open politics, and was well-received by many members of the ACFC since the organization's initial strategy of ignoring anti-French groups was ineffective. Even Archbishop Mathieu noted his approval in the new ACFC outlook as long as the francophones remained prudent and moderate in their response.¹³⁶ Denis was not one to shy away from controversy or political debates. Wherever schools and the French language were threatened, he declared, Saskatchewan francophones would rise to the occasion:

Il faut montrer à nos adversaires, qu'ils portent des capuchons la nuit ou qu'ils n'en portent pas, qu'ils ont manqué leur effet, parce que nos districts d'école sont solidaires les uns des autres. Lorsqu'un district est attaqué, tous le sont par le même et tous ont le devoir de concourir à le défendre...lorsqu'ils n'ont fait que remplir leur devoir, et qu'ils sont des victimes du fanatisme mesquin et bête de nos adversaires, notre devoir est de les aider dans la mesure de nos forces.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 220-221.

¹³⁵ Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 221-222. See also André N. Lalonde, "Raymond Denis: l'homme et ses mémoires," in *Héritage et avenir des francophones de l'Ouest* (Saskatoon: CEFCO, 1986), 19-27. Denis had a tendency to be somewhat heavy-handed in his leadership at times, but given the problems facing francophones in the province and region, few others in the community could match the type of leadership Denis offered.

¹³⁶ Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 164-165.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Lapointe et Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 227.

On the education portfolio, the results of Denis' new approach were immediate. Rather than remain in administrative deadlock with the Department of Education, Denis instructed the ACFC to simply appoint its own school inspectors or "distingués visiteurs" who, while lacking official department approval for their actions, were nonetheless used by the ACFC to report on the quality of French education around the province. After all, anyone could legally "visit" a school as long as local trustees approved it.¹³⁸ That same year, the ACFC also mounted its own educational program for French schools which included examinations, diplomas, and scholastic awards.

Denis also strengthened links between francophones in Saskatchewan and Quebec.¹³⁹ From 1925 to 1928 the ACFC spearheaded a number of trips to Quebec called "voyages de la survivance." These trips were "patriotic pilgrimages" to improve relations between francophones in the West and la Belle province, and to ensure that French Canadians in Quebec knew the precarious situation in western Canada.¹⁴⁰ The ACFC, in conjunction with francophone associations in Alberta and Manitoba, also scored a considerable victory for teacher recruitment following a troubling Saskatchewan government announcement that any French teacher recruited from Quebec must be proficient in English.¹⁴¹ Rather than pressure the Saskatchewan government to reconsider the new regulations the ACFC lobbied Quebec to change its normal school program for teachers to include courses in English so that they could also teach in western

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹³⁹ Denis corresponded regularly with Lionel Groulx in Quebec and even gave talks to the ACFC on behalf of Groulx. See Michel Bock, *A Nation Beyond Borders*, 130. Indeed, Denis' connections in Quebec were so well established that by the time the Depression was in full swing in 1934, he moved there with his family to take up the vice-presidency of the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de Montréal. He remained permanently in Quebec up to his death but made a number of visits back to western Canada and Saskatchewan after 1934. See Rossel Vien, *Radio française dans l'Ouest* (Quebec: Hurtubise HMH, 1977), 20-21.

¹⁴⁰ Bock, *A Nation Beyond Borders*, 225. French Canadians in Quebec returned the favour as well under a group called "Liaison française" which organized a number of trips out West for missionaries and travellers, some of whom were interested in settling in the region. See Gratien Allaire, "De l'Église à l'État: le financement des organismes francophones de l'Ouest, 1956-1970," in Jean Lafontant (dir.), *L'État et les minorités* (Saint-Boniface: Éditions du Blé, 1993), 231.

¹⁴¹ Anderson, *Settling Saskatchewan*, 295-296.

Canada. The plan worked. Quebec directed its schools to provide English courses so that their graduates would be qualified. Teachers from Quebec could now work in Saskatchewan's schools, helping francophones in the province solve the critical problem of finding bilingual French teachers.¹⁴²

The Rise of J.T.M. Anderson and the Revenge of the Conservatives, 1925-1929

As the ACFC gathered strength under the leadership of Raymond Denis, provincial politics continued to move away from the old Liberal-minority consensus. The Klan busied itself consolidating its numbers and ramping up attacks on Catholicism and French Canadians. Klan organizer J.J. Maloney reported that the Liberals were pandering to the "foreign vote," "catering to Rome," and allowing the use of the French language in government.¹⁴³ The fight for bilingual teachers led by Denis and the ACFC had not gone unnoticed by the Klan. Lewis Scott, another Klan organizer and close ally of Maloney, informed Saskatchewan Premier Jimmy Gardiner that

We will oppose in every way possible the enforcing of bilingualism in this province. We believe in UNITY of the Canadian People and that in this great NATION we should have ONE LANGUAGE, and do not wish to see this part of Canada divided by language as is found in other parts of the world.¹⁴⁴

Klan ideology dovetailed well with Protestant fundamentalism and British Canadian nationalism.¹⁴⁵ The Klan sought to convince people in Saskatchewan that francophone Catholics

¹⁴² Tessier and Lapointe, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 224.

¹⁴³ Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 102. Maloney was the "driving force behind the Klan in Alberta" and managed to establish 11 Klan locals in the province by 1930. *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 109.

¹⁴⁵ See for example Raymond Huel's excellent study in the thought of J.J. Maloney, prominent Klansmen, in "J.J. Maloney: How the West was Saved from Rome, Quebec, and the Liberals," in John E. Foster (ed.), *The Developing West: Essays on Canadian History in Honor of Lewis H. Thomas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 219-241. The lack of Klan success in Ontario can be partially explained by the dominance of the Orange Lodge in that province. See Houston, *The Sash Canada Wore*.

in western Canada sought to establish a second Quebec in the West.¹⁴⁶ Quebec, and by extension French speakers in the West, were portrayed as a principal threat to British Canadian values and ascendancy in the province.¹⁴⁷ The anti-Catholicism of the Klan borrowed from American ideas of Anglo-Protestant supremacy and applied them to the regional context of politics in western Canada. In western Canada, opposing Catholicism and separate schools necessarily meant opposing the francophone threat as well. The loyalty of francophone Catholics, so the argument went, was to Quebec and Rome, not Canada and Britain. If some parts of the population continued to hold such misguided views it would be impossible to properly build a unified nation and society.¹⁴⁸ As S.P. Rondeau bitterly complained, "All our troubles, all the sedition, plotting and plans against the national school system are hatched in Quebec."¹⁴⁹

The political battle over separate schools, French language rights, minorities, and British ascendancy, which stretched back to the earliest political days of western Canada, was reaching a critical point. Premier Gardiner attacked the Klan publicly. The KKK, Orange Lodge, and members of the Anglican clergy helped orchestrate a number of complaints in 1926 that Protestant students, who were a minority in francophone Catholic school districts, were being forced to use French textbooks that were "sectarian," "Quebec-based," and full of "Catholic ideology. Premier Gardiner fired back, arguing that Canada was a partnership between French- and English-speaking peoples, that respecting French rights was what defined Canada as a

¹⁴⁶ Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 249-250. "The Klan's arrival in Saskatchewan, then, could not have come at a more opportune time. By aggressively articulating the grievances of those who believed that the British character of the province was under attack, it became a force in the province--even though the first organizers absconded with the membership fees." *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁴⁷ Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 103-105.

¹⁴⁸ "The Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan was under the paranoid delusion that French Catholics were on the brink of taking over the west. For them, the scenario resembled what had occurred in the Eastern Townships in Quebec, as depicted in Robert Sellar's *The Tragedy of Quebec: The Expulsion of its Protestant Farmers* (Toronto, Ontario Press, 1907). French Catholics moved into the Eastern Townships and displaced English Protestant farmers who had lived there for generations. They took over the schools and made it impossible for Protestant children to have access to non-sectarian education." Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 144.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 108.

British nation, and that the French-English partnership established early in Canadian history could be an example of diversity and tolerance for Saskatchewan.¹⁵⁰ Gardiner also painted the Klan and its supporters as overly American and un-British, and vowed that his government would not kowtow to such a group.¹⁵¹

Nobody was willing to back down. Protestant church ministers, the Klan, and the Orange Lodge continued to organize political attacks on the use of French in schools. In 1928 they raised more complaints against a number of school districts, alleging that French was being used as the language of instruction past grade one.¹⁵² The communities of Ferland, Gouverneur, Begin, Gravelbourg, Bruno, Poirier, Val Marie, and Moose Pond were all embroiled in controversies.¹⁵³ All of these communities also had significant francophone Catholic populations and suffered as a consequence. In Gravelbourg, Protestants were enraged that the public school was housed in a convent, while at Courval the school was defaced by someone claiming "unfair conditions in this public school demands [sic] investigation and action."¹⁵⁴ At Ferland, a group of people broke into the school and removed crucifixes from the walls. In Val Marie the school board secretary tried to postpone the annual board meeting due to the death of his wife but forgot to remove the public meeting notices; anti-Catholic community members held the meeting anyway and an all-Protestant board was elected.¹⁵⁵ The ACFC, true to Denis' combative spirit, was instrumental in defending community interests. It moved quickly to help trustees in several francophone school districts, including Moose Pond and Gravelbourg, by paying for legal fees and offering political

¹⁵⁰ Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 51.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁵³ "School Districts Where Language and Other Difficulties Have Been Encountered." *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan*, James G. Gardiner Fonds. See also Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 88-91.

¹⁵⁴ See photo in Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 245.

¹⁵⁵ Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 172.

support. The work of the ACFC allowed trustees to have the allegations against them dismissed.¹⁵⁶

Denying "French Control": The 1929 General Election in Saskatchewan

The 1929 election was viewed as a referendum on the burning questions of the decade, particularly separate schools, immigration, and the cultural makeup of Saskatchewan.¹⁵⁷ The electoral campaign was bitter.¹⁵⁸ The vice-president of the provincial Conservative party, J.F. Bryant, warned that if the pace of Catholic immigration from continental Europe to Saskatchewan continued, the "French [would] control the political destinies of Quebec, Saskatchewan, and all of Canada."¹⁵⁹ The Conservatives lambasted the Liberal government, telling voters that Premier Gardiner wanted to make Saskatchewan a bilingual province and that under the Liberals' watch, the francophone population was doing that.¹⁶⁰ Conservative leader J.T.M. Anderson argued that the Liberals had let down the population by not taking into account the "danger which knocks at our gates."¹⁶¹ Voting Conservative, the party argued in its campaign

¹⁵⁶ Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," 715; Wilfrid Denis and Peter Li, "The Politics of Language Loss: A Francophone Case from Western Canada," *Journal of Education Policy* 3, no. 4 (1988), 356-357; Huel, "French Language Education in Saskatchewan," in Susan M. Trofimenkoff, *The Twenties in Western Canada*, Papers of the Western Canadian Studies Conference (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1972), 230-242.

¹⁵⁷ Some historians such as Peter A. Russell have argued that the sectarianism and language were not the central issues raised by the Conservative party in the 1929 election. Rather, Russell argues, the Conservative party's campaign wished to reveal the corruption of the Liberal machine and the need for civil service reform, rather than appeal to the bigotry of the Anglo-Saxon population. While it is true that the Conservative campaign was originally focused on exposing Liberal corruption, Russell's conclusion must also be weighed against evidence of the success of the KKK and Orange Order in convincing the population that the Liberals were pandering to Quebec, Catholics, and minorities. With these groups working to convince the population that sectarian schools, immigration, bilingualism, and federal political meddling were the Liberals' responsibility, all the Conservatives had to do was offer an electoral alternative. See Russell, "The Saskatchewan Conservatives, Separate Schools and the 1929 Election," *Prairie Forum* 8, no. 2 (1983), 211-223.

¹⁵⁸ Anthony Appleblatt, "The School Question in the 1929 Saskatchewan Provincial Election," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Study Sessions* 43 (1976), 75-90.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 232.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁶¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 105.

messaging, meant ending the divisive presence of Catholic schools and neutralizing the influence of Quebec and the Catholic church in provincial politics.¹⁶²

Premier Gardiner's strategy followed the usual Liberal plan which had kept the party in power since 1905: portray the opposition as bigots appealing to racial and religious zealotry, and insist on the economic and administrative success of the Liberals. Gardiner attacked Anderson for his classic treatise on assimilation in education, *The Education of the New-Canadian*¹⁶³, holding the work up as proof of Anderson's lack of respect towards new Canadians. But the Liberal strategy could not quell the desire for change. Gardiner's Liberals won 24 seats and Anderson's Conservatives won 24 as well. Anderson formed the Cooperative Government with five Progressive members and some independents when Gardiner's government lost power on a non-confidence motion.

The 1929 election demonstrated that the separate schools and bilingualism questions were still important in Saskatchewan, even twenty four years after the province was founded. Moreover, while the francophones were a small minority in western Canada, their place in provincial politics was not. To a restive anti-bilingualism movement, the francophones were at the forefront of the battle because they represented a different idea of the Saskatchewan political community. They represented the idea of cultural partnership between anglophones and francophones raised by Monk, Bourassa, and Laurier during the autonomy bill debates in 1905. These ideas were simply unacceptable to those who saw Saskatchewan as a British political community where the best people, institutions, and society of the British Empire would flourish. The opposing vision of bilingualism and cultural survival espoused by francophones could not be

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁶³ *A Treatise on Canada's Greatest Educational Problem* (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1918). The book established Anderson's reputation as an educational scholar and led to his appointment as provincial Director of Education among new Canadians in 1918.

allowed to sunder the promise of a British West. In the minds of the KKK and the Orange Lodge, the hand of Quebec and the Catholic church was guiding the region's francophones, who in turn were supported by the provincial Liberal machine. The only way to stop the francophones was to unite against them and make the majority realise the seriousness of the task at hand. The ACFC sensed the danger in the campaign rhetoric. Knowing that its history of cordial relations with the Liberal party put it in an awkward and vulnerable position, the Comité exécutif told its members that French Catholics were free to vote for whomever they chose and that the ACFC had never officially taken sides with one party or another since its founding.¹⁶⁴ But, the ACFC continued, it was important for francophones to vote for the party that would be most sympathetic to francophones.¹⁶⁵

French-Language Rights and the Anderson Government (1929 to 1934)

As Premier J.T.M. Anderson organized his new government, he also assumed responsibility for a portfolio in which he had a great deal of expertise -- education. Not content with his electoral victory over the Liberals, Anderson immediately announced that the previous Liberal government had allowed schools to be used for Catholic proselytizing and propagating "anti-British" messages.¹⁶⁶ From Anderson's point of view, even the ousting of the Liberals would not completely rid Saskatchewan of Catholic Quebec's influence. Others agreed. When the federal Postmaster General stated that some post offices would offer French language services in Saskatchewan, the Conservative *Saskatoon Daily Star* denounced bilingualism and Quebec's interference in Saskatchewan affairs. The printing of the report of the *Royal*

¹⁶⁴ The claim was only half true, since the ACFC had maintained fairly close ties to the Liberals from 1907 to 1921 when W.F.A. Turgeon was in cabinet. Before Turgeon left in 1921, for example, *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* asked what its "attitude must be for the next election and what campaign to start." Quoted in Smith, *Prairie Liberalism*, 170.

¹⁶⁵ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 114.

¹⁶⁶ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 127.

Commission on Radio Broadcasting in both French and English in a single volume also raised the ire of the *Star*, which called it an attempt "to force French upon the people of the British provinces."¹⁶⁷ "What are we in Canada," the paper thundered, "a colony of Quebec?"¹⁶⁸ At the next federal election, the *Star* warned, Saskatchewanians would let the federal government know what they really thought about bilingualism.¹⁶⁹

Anderson's first major decision as Premier was to undo the ACFCs work on bilingual teachers and rescind the exchange of teaching certificates with Quebec because their formation was "inferior" to that offered in Saskatchewan. He also promised to investigate allegations of illegal French teaching in schools.¹⁷⁰ The Quebec government, acting on the request of the ACFC to look into Anderson's accusations, insisted that its graduates were as competent as those in Saskatchewan.¹⁷¹ Next, Anderson announced that English would be the only language of instruction in Saskatchewan's schools. Denis and the ACFC were furious and vowed to oppose the legislation. Religious instruction in French was particularly concerning for the francophone community.¹⁷² In January 1930 the ACFC held a private meeting with Anderson who suggested that the francophones simply close the school at noon hour or after 3:30PM and offer French catechism during those times.¹⁷³ It took Anderson's advice and worked around the law by offering religious instruction in French after the closing of schools from 3:30 to 4PM.

The francophone community was dealt another crucial blow when Archbishop Olivier Elzéar Mathieu died at the end of 1929. Saskatchewan francophones could no longer count on

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 129-131.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Raymond Huel, "The Anderson Amendments and the Secularization of Saskatchewan Public Schools, *CCHA Study Sessions* 44 (1977), 61-76.

¹⁷¹ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 133.

¹⁷² Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 230.

¹⁷³ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 136. In districts where francophone Catholics almost exclusively made up the population, Denis simply instructed teachers to ignore the law.

Mathieu's sound judgment, tact, and diplomacy which defined his years as Regina's first Archbishop.¹⁷⁴ As debates over education and the Anderson amendments continued, the clergy missed the clear direction that once characterized Mathieu's leadership.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, Mathieu was succeeded by an Irish Catholic as was Archbishop Emile Légal in 1920. These new Archbishops lacked the empathy and political drive that characterized the leadership of Mathieu and Légal, and mark the beginning of the decline in French-Catholic political influence in western Canada.¹⁷⁶

The decline in francophone clerical influence meant that the ACFC had to redouble its efforts. Raymond Denis took up Mathieu's diplomatic work, meeting with Anderson before the first session of the Legislature began in February 1930. Anderson assured Denis that he was "not bigoted or biased in any way" and that "no minority in this province is going to be persecuted by any Government I have the honour to lead, nor is any minority going to be allowed to impose its beliefs upon a majority."¹⁷⁷ The reassurance rung hollow for Denis and the francophones. Their mistrust was only confirmed when the session began and Anderson introduced the government's first piece of legislation, Bill 2, which banned religious symbols and religious garb in public schools during instructional time. British Protestants applauded the new amendment. The *Daily Star* argued that Anderson's amendment carried out the spirit of the *School Act* as conceived by the province's father, Frederick Haultain.¹⁷⁸

The ACFC denounced the new *School Act* and asked priests across the province to mobilize francophone opposition to it. Although the ACFC saw religious instruction and language issues as somewhat separate from one another, Denis believed that if the government

¹⁷⁴ Lapointe and Tessier, *Histoire des Franco-Canadiens de la Saskatchewan*, 230.

¹⁷⁵ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 158.

¹⁷⁶ Lalonde, "The French Canadians of the West: Hope, Tragedy, Uncertainty," 113-114.

¹⁷⁷ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 140.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

eliminated religious instruction, language amendments would soon follow.¹⁷⁹ A flood of telegrams were sent to the Premier in a last-ditch attempt to change Anderson's mind but they had no effect. He was determined to make good on his promises to further reduce Catholicism in Saskatchewan schools.¹⁸⁰

The noisy editorials of the *Daily Star* and the Orange Lodge *Sentinel* in Saskatchewan elicited a response from Québec. Premier Louis-Alexandre Taschereau publicly chided Anderson for repressing French teaching.¹⁸¹ Henri Bourassa offered an even more depressing assessment of the situation. The real problem, he argued, was Sir Wilfrid Laurier's failure to fight for better protections of French language rights in 1905. The deficiencies of the *Saskatchewan Act* were now in full view.¹⁸² The unfortunate effect of Quebec's wading into Saskatchewan politics was that it reinforced the persecution complex that British Protestants in western Canada had when it came to Quebec and central Canada. The Orange *Sentinel* warned that Saskatchewan's provincial rights would be trampled on in order to appease Quebec's French population. Citing the statements made by Taschereau and Bourassa, the *Sentinel* argued that a campaign was underway to coerce the province into rescinding its education legislation.¹⁸³

In Saskatchewan, there was widespread belief that Anderson ought to reform the entire educational system. Abolishment of religious instruction, symbols, and garb was not enough. There was still the matter of French-language instruction.¹⁸⁴ The Conservative press and British Protestant groups continued their campaign against French and showed little sign of letting up.

¹⁷⁹ The ACFC even went as far as seeking a legal opinion from Senator N.A. Belcourt who had helped defend the Franco-Ontarians in 1912 when Ontario's provincial government repressed religious and French language instruction in that province. Belcourt, however, concluded in his report that the Saskatchewan government was within its rights to regulate education so long as it followed what was outlined in the *Saskatchewan Act* of 1905. *Ibid.*, 155-156.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 147-148.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁸⁴ Privately, Anderson assured the Conservative party and his supporters that decisive action would be taken on French. *Ibid.*, 171.

Even in areas where French was not the major question at hand it attracted controversy. During a provincial Royal Commission hearing, for example, it came to light that French-speaking police officers and Justices of the Peace were used in communities such as Gravelbourg where the population was predominantly francophone. The Commissioners expressed doubts as to whether or not French still enjoyed official status in the province's courts:

...we were then under the impression that Ch. 22 of the 1891 Dominion Statutes, being the last Statute making the English and the French language official in the Courts of the North West Territories, had not been repealed by the Parliament of Canada, and we were inclined to the opinion that the French language was official in the said Courts by virtue of said Ch. 22 of 1891, which had been continued by the Saskatchewan Act, and so expressed ourselves. But we have since ascertained that said Ch. 22 of 1891 was repealed by the Parliament of Canada...which places the question as to whether the French language is official in these Courts in a very doubtful position...Under such circumstances, we think it would be unwise to express ourselves with greater finality.¹⁸⁵

The question was by no means clear from a legal or historical point of view, which alarmed Anderson and his supporters.¹⁸⁶ The Premier promised an immediate investigation to ensure that Laurier and the provincial Liberals had not secretly colluded to make Saskatchewan officially bilingual in 1905.¹⁸⁷

In May 1930 Anderson called on two normal school professors to launch an inquiry into bilingual schools. In their report to the Premier dated January 1931, C.E. Brown and J.A. Gagné concluded that French students had an inadequate knowledge of English because of French instruction, and recommended that the primary course in French be abolished. Anderson took the report seriously. Its conclusions dovetailed nicely with the popular belief in Saskatchewan that French had no place in a western Canadian province. As Anderson himself noted, the French primary course "was materially and psychologically out of order in a Canadian prairie province"

¹⁸⁵ *Royal Commission to Inquire into Statements Made in Statutory Declarations and Other Matters* (Regina, King's Printer, 1931), 13. See also Huel, "La Survivance en Saskatchewan," 174.

¹⁸⁶ Huel, "La Survivance en Saskatchewan," 174.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

and that getting rid of French should foster "a greater measure of unity and harmony in Saskatchewan."¹⁸⁸ In February 1931, Anderson introduced new legislation to repeal the use of French in the primary course and as a language of instruction. French could remain a subject of study for up to one hour a day at a school board's discretion but it could no longer be used as the language of instruction under any circumstances. This amendment led to the somewhat comical contradiction that French could be studied for an hour a day in all grades, so long as instruction was in English.¹⁸⁹

The debates over Anderson's amendments revealed alternate visions of the West and nation. The Liberals, led by Gardiner, argued that Anderson was out of touch with the times. Dr. J.M. Uhrich, who served in cabinet as Public Health Minister between 1922 and 1926, panned the amendment as "humiliating" and a "gross injustice" to the francophones. Uhrich firmly believed that bilingualism in western Canada was not a barrier to regional unity.¹⁹⁰ The Conservative members replied that French was not an official language in the province and that teaching in French could happen anywhere as long as it was not during school hours. The *Daily Star* congratulated Anderson's government for liberating francophone students "from the burden of a language that is in no sense essential to their daily needs"¹⁹¹ since, after all, they were in western Canada and not Quebec. Having only one language would be beneficial not only to the unity of the province, region, and nation, but also to the education of a minority that should accept the realities of living in a British province.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁸⁹ Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 89.

¹⁹⁰ Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," 192-93.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

The ACFC met with Anderson to discuss the amendment but he refused to change his position. The government's stance on French, Anderson told the ACFC, was "irrevocable."¹⁹³ The ACFC opted to defy the government. Denis instructed French teachers to simply ignore the new law. But it is difficult to know whether school districts actually followed Denis' advice because school inspectors were aggressive in keeping languages other than English out of schools.¹⁹⁴ There is some anecdotal evidence in the francophone community that the law was ignored, but it remains to be investigated whether there was a systematic attempt to continue the teaching of French in the primary course. As Fransaskois sociologist Wilfrid Denis points out, 1931 was the "lowest point for language rights in general, and for Francophone rights in particular, in Saskatchewan."¹⁹⁵

By the time Anderson finished reforming education in 1931 signs of the Great Depression were already present in western Canada. The Depression changed prairie politics, so much that many historians have argued that it ended racism, Francophobia, anti-immigration attitudes, and the popularity of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁹⁶ There is, however, another reason why major political movements against French faded out of provincial politics in Saskatchewan: they were successful in achieving their political goals. By the time Anderson's government was crushed by the Liberals at the polls in 1934, Catholic religious symbols and the French language had been all but removed from Saskatchewan's schools. Francophobia and xenophobia were now minimal issues in Saskatchewan because of Anderson's steadfastness in eliminating Catholicism and French in schools. Once the symbolic political culture of the

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 89.

¹⁹⁶ See for example Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*; Huel, "La Survivance in Saskatchewan," Brennan, "A Political History of Saskatchewan," and Waiser, *Saskatchewan*.

province had been restored, political leaders could busy themselves with the real business of building a province and dealing with the Depression.

Conclusion

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the political history of Saskatchewan from 1905 to 1931. Questions of political culture and symbolic politics raised before 1905 and during the autonomy bill debates remained on the political agenda of Saskatchewan up to the Great Depression. While there were undoubtedly other political questions occupying the minds of leaders and the general population, the burning question of the *nature* of western Canada -- its institutions, culture, and politics -- remained at the forefront of provincial politics during the 1905-1931 period. The powerful Liberal machine in Saskatchewan was not undone by appeals to farmer's rights or better terms with the federal government. The Liberal party had done a great deal on these portfolios to satisfy the population. In Saskatchewan it took the language, schools, and immigration questions to take down the Liberals -- a fact which demonstrates the importance that early western Canadians placed on identity and culture.

Secondly, the perception that the federal government and Quebec exerted too much control over western Canadian politics was popular. The KKK, the Orange Lodge, and the Conservatives capitalized on this sentiment in order to convince people that outside forces were conspiring to prevent Saskatchewan from fully exercising its provincial rights and autonomy. Thus in a way, the original expansionist idea, which held that the West should be a new society unfettered by the problems of older Canada, continued to arouse a great deal of passion amongst British Canadian Protestants. In Saskatchewan the strategy of associating the provincial Liberal

party with federal government control, foreigners, Catholicism, and bilingualism, which was originally used by Haultain, finally paid off.

The Anderson amendments and the onset of the Great Depression mark the end of the second wave of major political controversies over the French language in Saskatchewan. This political pattern is consistent with what other western Canadian historians have observed -- namely, that the period between 1870 and the Depression was a formative one for the region's culture and politics.¹⁹⁷ During these years, western Canadians struggled over the character of the region's political community. In Saskatchewan, a key part of this battle was the place of French in provincial constitutions, institutions, and schools. As the Second World War approached, the French language question was settled for the foreseeable future.

From a francophone point of view, the outcome of these battles over the status of French during western Canada's formative political years was dismal. French was not considered an official language in any western province, although this attitude would be challenged later during the 1970s and 1980s. French language instruction in schools was all but outlawed in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The aggressive push for British cultural ascendancy in provincial institutions was, by many accounts, a success. Finally, the Depression saw the outflow of many French-speaking professionals -- doctors, lawyers, and teachers -- who sought to escape the tough times by taking their education and work elsewhere. Many of these professionals were

¹⁹⁷ See for example Friesen, "Studies in the Development of Western Canadian Regional Consciousness"; Friesen, "Recent Historical Writing on the Prairie West," in Doug Francis and Howard Palmer (eds.), *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 5-18; Paul Voisey, "The Urbanization of the Canadian Prairies, 1871-1916," in *Ibid.*, 383-407; and Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974).

active in politics and francophone organizations as well; with their departure, the francophones lost some secular community leadership.¹⁹⁸

But not all was lost. During the early decades of provincial politics in Saskatchewan, francophones managed to form a provincial association, found a provincial newspaper, and maintain a level of political organization and presence during major debates. The hard work of clergymen, francophone politicians, and community leaders meant that the dream of a bilingual West was not dead. Moreover, the fact that some British Canadian leaders recognized a special place for francophones in western Canada meant that the francophones had succeeded in defending their interpretation of the region's history.

While British-Protestant allegations of conspiracy between Quebec, federal/provincial Liberals, and western Canadian francophones were grossly exaggerated, it is true that the ACFC had informal connections to the provincial Liberal party. It is also true that Quebec espoused a pan-Canadian French-Canadian nationalism, best represented by the thought of Henri Bourassa¹⁹⁹, and that francophones in the West viewed Quebec as a political ally. The ACFC worked hard in order to maintain social and political connections to Quebec, and continued to share some ideological affinities with French-Canadians in that province. But francophones in Saskatchewan differed somewhat from Quebec's French speakers because of their national origins, their particular geographic dispersal, the challenges of living on the frontier and with other minority groups, and their lack of demographic dominance. To many Saskatchewan francophones, Quebec-based political associations were helpful in organizing the community but could not do the job as well as secular, homegrown organizations.

¹⁹⁸ André Lalonde, "The French Canadians of the West: Hope, Tragedy, Uncertainty," in Dean R. Louder and Eric Waddell (eds.), *French America: Mobility, Identity, and Minority Experience Across the Continent* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 113.

¹⁹⁹ Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*.

Why is it important to understand the early historical trajectory of the French language in Saskatchewan? In order to understand a political community, it is crucial to study its formative years. The years between 1905 and 1931 were formative for Saskatchewan and Alberta in terms of political institutions and political cultures. After 1931, the burning question of Saskatchewan's political community lost importance, not only because of the hardship brought on by the Depression but also because the movement against separate schools and bilingualism were so successful. The groups that sprang up to ensure that English would dominate had accomplished their goals and were no longer necessary.

CHAPTER THREE

"A Permitted Language, Without any Official Recognition": Bilingualism and Education, 1968 to 1990

Dépourvus depuis si longtemps du contrôle de ses propres moyens de développement, il n'est pas sûr que la communauté francosaskoise pourra survivre. Il n'est pas sûr non plus que l'on veuille lui remettre justement le contrôle dont elle a besoin pour profiter de l'apport des media. À la suite de décennies de politiques d'assimilation, les Fransaskois se retrouvent sans écoles sans églises, sans territoire à eux. Faut-il se surprendre que plusieurs y aient oublié leur identité? Advenant qu'on assurerait aux Fransaskois l'accès aux media, retrouvera-t-on chez-eux les énergies nécessaires pour les utiliser à bon escient?¹

- Gustave Dubois

Notre gouvernement s'est engagé à honorer l'article 23 de la Charte tel que nous l'entendons. La question qui reste à résoudre entre le gouvernement, votre association et la Commission des écoles francosaskoises (C.E.F.) est de savoir jusqu'à quel point les Fransaskois sont en droit de contrôler et de diriger étroitement l'éducation de leurs enfants.²

- Grant Devine

Introduction

The Fransaskois were at their breaking point. On 14 April 1965, over 30 years after J.T.M. Anderson's Conservative government made teaching in any language other than English illegal³, a group of francophone parents withdrew their children from school in Saskatoon. "This action," they declared, "is taken in protest...against the cultural genocide that has been perpetrated for the last 60 years in the province and continues to be perpetrated without hope of immediate alleviation."⁴ The parents refused to send their children back to school until the

¹ ACFC et Gustave Dubois, "La situation scolaire des Fransaskois," August 1980. *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan [PAS]*, ACFC Fonds.

² Grant Devine to Liguori LeBlanc, 12 novembre 1985. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds. The document was also published in *La Revue de l'Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française* 9, no. 2 (novembre 1980), 19-22.

³ See chapter two for more information on Anderson's election, vision, and the Anderson amendments between 1929 and 1934.

⁴ "Press Release," 13 April 1965. Wilfrid Denis, Papers. The document is reprinted in Comité scolaire de Saskatoon, "Brief presented by Le comité scolaire de Saskatoon to the Saskatchewan Committee on Instruction in Languages Other than English," 1966. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

government implemented French-language education; the board threatened to expel the students.⁵

In response to the protests, Liberal Premier Ross Thatcher appointed the Saskatchewan Committee on Instruction in Languages other than English (Tait Commission), and invited minority groups in the province, including the Fransaskois, to submit briefs and recommendations on non-English instruction.⁶ The ACFC was uncompromising in its understanding of Saskatchewan history and why the francophone community deserved French-language education:

It should be of general knowledge to every Canadian pupil of this Western portion of Canada that the French people have been the pioneers of civilization in these Western provinces...they were here a long time before anyone from Ontario even thought of coming out West...The French opened up these territories for others to follow and neither suffering nor hardship could deter their indomitable spirit from pushing ahead...it saw the rise of bigotry and hatred blend into the short-sighted and fanatical views of a Mr. Haultain and a Mr. Tweed...And so French, the maternal tongue of the founding people of Western Canada, one of the two languages recognized as the two official languages of Canada by the British North America Act of 1867 became, by the grace of a fanatical minority, relegated to a second rank, to be taught in schools as a second language even to its own French-speaking element when the local English-speaking majority deemed it to be so taught in its school districts.⁷

⁵ *Ibid.* See also Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 92. The standoff ended in March 1966 when the Fransaskois of Saskatoon opened their own "École canadienne de Saskatoon," a private school in the basement of a home, with 28 students. "French see need for new site as 28 attend opening classes," *Star Phoenix*, 8 March 1966.

⁶ Some English language advocates also submitted briefs to the Commission. The Voice of Canada League, describing itself as "a voice for English-speaking Canada in the great B&B debate," wrote to the Commission that "Surely Saskatchewan - of all Canadian provinces - must recognize that those Canadians who came to western Canada - to 'found' that part of our nation - were invited from many lands other than France and British countries - in order that they might settle and become 'Canadians' only...they did not come with the original thought that they might carry on their educations in languages other than the English language - which was and is today the only official language for communication in our Country." Deane H. Russell to Tait Commission Secretary, 20 March 1966. Wilfrid Denis Papers.

⁷ ACFC, "Brief to the Saskatchewan Committee on Instruction in Languages other than English," 15 April 1966, 12-14. Wilfrid Denis Papers.

The Tait Commission tabled its report in 1966.⁸ The document had little to say about the sad history of French language education in the province, except that "The language need [sic] of our schools was to teach English as a common denominator of communication."⁹ It recommended maintaining the status quo: "Although there are several ethnic groups in Saskatchewan and each may desire to preserve its language and its culture, it is a matter of compelling significance that the vast majority of people in this province speak English."¹⁰ Its only recommendation was that the province introduce one hour of French-language instruction during school hours if a school board allowed it -- a return to the meagre educational rights francophones in the province had before 1931.¹¹ In 1967 the government amended the *School Act* accordingly. A 1968 amendment empowered cabinet to "designate" French-language schools and the number of hours that could be taught in French.¹² The Fransaskois panned the report, and over twenty years of conflict over French-language education ensued.¹³

This chapter examines French-language education policies and controversies in Saskatchewan between 1968 and 1990. During these years the Fransaskois, provincial government, and school boards fought a growing number of battles over the place of French in the province's education system. Although the 1967 and 1968 *School Act* amendments marked a

⁸ The effects of Fransaskois activism on government are evident in the Committee's Terms of Reference, which said: "Pursuant to submission and inquiries received by the Department of Education in respect to French language instruction, the Minister of Education has deemed it advisable to appoint a special committee to conduct a study of present programs of instruction in languages other than English in the provincial school system." *Report of the Saskatchewan Committee on Instruction in Languages other than English* (Tait Commission), 1966.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26. The committee did, however, recommend that Saskatchewan examine the possibility of extending elementary education in French beyond one hour a day "provided that instruction in English shall be for a period not less than sixty per cent of the total school day." *Ibid.*, 28.

¹² *Act to amend The School Act*, s. 11-12, c. 35, 1967 (Sask); *Act to amend The School Act*, s. 14, c. 66, 1968 (Sask).

¹³ "We are not prepared to accept any denial of the French fact in this country...As French Canadians living in this part of Canada, having refused to be integrated culturally into the English speaking cultural society, we have retained our full and undeniably complete right to remain what we are and acquire the means by which to do so." Comité scolaire de Saskatoon, "Brief presented by Le comité scolaire de Saskatoon to the Saskatchewan Committee on Instruction in Languages other than English," 1966. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

new era in the history of education in Saskatchewan, they did not usher in an era of linguistic peace. The Fransaskois seized political opportunities presented by the federal government's bilingualism in education policies, while the provincial government and school boards fought a defensive battle centring on board autonomy, provincial autonomy, and multiculturalism. Both the Saskatoon East School Unit dispute and the constitutional challenge of the *Education Act, 1978* centred on the nature of French-language education in Saskatchewan and the degree of control the Fransaskois community could exert over education. The first battle ended in defeat for the Fransaskois. The second one was a Fransaskois victory, but even with constitutional rights and favourable court decisions it took almost a decade to implement Fransaskois school governance.

Education is about the values of a society. Studying education in all its complexity -- the ideas taught, the language of instruction, policy, institutional history, the contemporary politics surrounding funding and infrastructure -- can provide insights into society's political community. The educational system represents the continuity and stability of a society. For constitutional reasons, education is central to provincial political culture because it falls exclusively under provincial jurisdiction, with the exception of section 93 of the *British North America Act, 1867* and official minority language rights outlined in section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.¹⁴ For minority groups, education is a cornerstone of cultural and linguistic survival. Education professor and former plaintiff in the *Mahé* case Angeline Martel argues that

Education is a frequent focus of minority demands because of the central role it is seen to play in the protection and development of language and of linguistic and cultural identity. More than a simple milieu of language transmission, schools are important social institutions where culture and group identity are constructed and

¹⁴ Section 23 of the *Charter* provides that citizens "whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside...have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province." *Constitution Act, 1982*, Schedule B, *Canada Act 1982*, 1982, c. 11 (U.K.).

reproduced. It is also in schools and around school matters that the social networks which consolidate minority group are created and reconstructed. The school system has traditionally represented the main social institution, where the linguistic and cultural future of the next generations were at stake. Furthermore, the importance conferred to schooling within minority institutions comes from a realization that it is the locus of the homogenizing and domination-fostering forces of majority institutions.¹⁵

Education is also a reflection of political and cultural undercurrents in society. In this vein, the two case studies presented in this chapter illustrate the broader, troubled history of French-language rights in Saskatchewan. Although NDP Premier Allan Blakeney and Progressive Conservative Premier Grant Devine both made attempts to expand French-language education in Saskatchewan, the province's history of assimilation and Anglo-conformity weighed heavily on events. As the renowned Fransaskois sociologist Wilfrid Denis writes, it is important to account for the weight of history because "even as gains are made in certain dimensions, the dross of history weighs heavily on minorities. Existing hegemonic controls from previous eras still play a significant role."¹⁶ The heavy hand of history in Saskatchewan bequeathed a political community resistant to official bilingualism. That the Fransaskois achieved their own homogenous francophone schools and boards demonstrates their political determination and expertise as a community, in addition to the importance of federal politics in influencing the outcomes of language politics provincially.

Early attempts: 1968 to 1977

The election of Jean Lesage's Liberal government in Quebec and the appointment of the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, along with Fransaskois activism during the 1950s and 1960s, placed an increasing amount of

¹⁵ Angeline Martel, "Language planning, Ideology and Constitutional Law: Francophone Minority Education in Canada," *Language Problems & Language Planning* 20, no. 2 (1996), 128.

¹⁶ Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 100-101.

pressure on Saskatchewan Liberal Premier Ross Thatcher and his government. Thatcher, a politician already well known locally for his "aggressive style and single-mindedness"¹⁷, had little time for official bilingualism. He once mentioned during a trip to Ontario in 1967, for example, that "we need more French in Saskatchewan like we need a hole in the head."¹⁸ Grudgingly, Thatcher expanded French-language education in Saskatchewan in 1968, but his government was careful in how it portrayed this new policy. "Let me only say at this time," he assured the legislature, "that no compulsion will be involved. No English-speaking person in Saskatchewan will be obliged to learn French."¹⁹ The New Democratic Party welcomed more French education but criticized it on multicultural grounds, arguing that more should be done for other minority languages as well. This view foreshadowed the stance on official bilingualism the NDP would make when it took power in the 1970s.²⁰

The 1968 amendments to the *School Act* and subsequent regulations also foreshadowed Saskatchewan's educational battles of the 1970s and 1980s. Under the new legislation, it was clear that English would continue to reign. School board autonomy and decision-making power was preserved and the amount of French-language instruction would diminish each year. A board would have to write the minister to request that a school be "designated" for French instruction and show that the arrangement was economically feasible.²¹

Proficiency in the English language was still a principal concern of the Saskatchewan government in 1968. That year, the civil service released its recommended French-language

¹⁷ See Dale Eisler, *Rumours of Glory: Saskatchewan and the Thatcher Years* (Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1987).

¹⁸ Quoted by Woodrow Lloyd in *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 19 February 1968, 44.

¹⁹ *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 21 February 1968, 87. Thatcher was trying to speak to a general belief in the province that French in education was a waste of time. See for example "Judge opposes teaching in French," *Star Phoenix*, 19 May 1966; "Teaching in English favoured," *Star Phoenix*, 19 May 1966.

²⁰ *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 23 February 1968, 183-184.

²¹ Taken from Saskatchewan, "Departmental Policy Governing the Designation and Operation of French Language Schools Under Section 209(2a) of the School Act," 15 July 1968. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

teaching times for all grades. French teaching would be slowly reduced from 100% in Kindergarten to 40% in grades ten to twelve.

Table 3.1: Recommended French-Language Teaching Times, Saskatchewan (1968)²²

| Level | Year | Recommended Time |
|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Kindergarten | - | Up to 100% |
| Division I | Year 1 | Up to 75% |
| | Year 2 | Up to 75% |
| | Year 3 | Up to 60% |
| Division II | Year 1 | Up to 60% |
| | Year 2 | Up to 50% |
| | Year 3 | Up to 50% |
| Division III | Grades 7-9 | Up to 50% |
| Division IV | Grades 10-12 | Up to 40% |

The government adopted even stricter regulations than those recommended by the civil service, permitting French instruction up to 50% of the time in Kindergarten, 40% in Grade One, 30% in Grade Two, and 20% in Grades Three to Twelve.²³ Therefore, proficiency in English -- or, as the Fransaskois viewed it, assimilation to the English language -- remained the principal goal of language education in Saskatchewan and would be assured by increases in the amount of English used in teaching.

In 1971 newly-elected Premier Allan Blakeney and his NDP government applied a slightly different ideal to education: multiculturalism. In 1973 the government amended the *School Act* to allow any language other than English to be used as a language of instruction.²⁴ The primacy of the English language, however, remained a priority. Several months before other amendments to the *School Act* were tabled in 1974, Associate Deputy Minister of Education Laurence M. Ready wrote to Frank Bogdasavich, Deputy Minister of Culture and Youth that

²² Taken from *Ibid.*, 2.

²³ L.M. Ready to F. Bogdasavich, 15 May 1973. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

²⁴ *Act to Amend the School Act (No. 1)*, 1973-1974, c. 103 (Saskatchewan), s. 10.

"Since English will continue to be the language of communication in most, if not all parts of Saskatchewan, pursuit of competence in its mastery should be paramount."²⁵ Further, Ready explained, "...all other languages should share second priority to English. But because French is one of Canada's official languages it deserves some special consideration."²⁶ The government relaxed restrictions on French teaching times but, after Grade Five, the maximum amount of French teaching allowed was 50% of the time.²⁷

The deficiencies of the 1968 and 1974 *School Act* amendments became more and more apparent in subsequent years. Language education in Saskatchewan was stuck between its assimilationist history and new, awkward attempts to make education more accommodating to Fransaskois and other minority group needs. Conflicts exploded between francophones and school boards in a number of Saskatchewan communities with strong Fransaskois populations, such as Debden (1971-1972), Assiniboia (1974), Prud'homme (1977), and Ferland, Delmas, Ponteix, Glaslyn, and Saskatoon (all in 1979).²⁸

At the root of these educational conflicts was the lack of clear legislation and policies for French-language education, which created problems for Allan Blakeney's government. On a pedagogical level the legislation created a vacuum in terms of materials and resources, because the government did not make provisions for creating French resources. French teachers deplored the lack of materials, textbooks, and curriculum guides; the government worried about a lack of teachers proficient in French.²⁹

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Denis, "Francophone education in Saskatchewan," 93.

²⁹ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, "Meeting Minutes: French Language Schools Planning Sub-Committee," 13 March 1971. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

On an administrative level, it was even worse. Boards fought each other over funding and transportation of students. They complained that the government asked them to provide French education and did not provide the necessary funding to do it. They fought the Fransaskois community over attendance, school designation, and transportation of Fransaskois students to French schools outside of their own jurisdiction. In the Gravelbourg area, for example, the Wood River School Unit refused to pay for a number of Fransaskois students' transportation to Collège Mathieu because Wood River did not authorize their attendance there.³⁰ Meanwhile the Fransaskois community accused the government of misspending federal dollars for francophone-only education by simply handing money over to school boards without accounting for how it was spent.³¹ The provincial government found itself caught between the Fransaskois community who appealed directly to it in order to have boards grant them French education, and the school boards who insisted that they remain autonomous from ministerial control.

In 1977 the Saskatchewan government undertook a major consolidation of its educational laws. At the time there were fifteen different laws related to education that needed to be revised. Unfortunately for both the government and the Fransaskois community, the new bill simply muddied the waters. The *White Paper on Consolidation and Revision of School Law in the Province of Saskatchewan* proposed "Joint Boards" where existing boards could establish and delegate authority to parallel boards.³² It retained English as the sole language of instruction in all schools and allowed boards to designate their own French schools. It also, however, vested power in Cabinet to designate schools, setting up a power struggle between the government,

³⁰ Ray Passmore to Rolland Pinsonneault, 13 August 1971. [PAS], ACFC Fonds. Rolland Pinsonneault to Gordon McMurchy, 27 August 1971. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

³¹ Donald Cyr, "Letter to the Editor," *Leader-Post*, 28 June 1977; "French query use of grants," *Leader-Post*, 20 July 1977; Ian Wilson to Clotaire Denis, 22 August 1977, [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

³² Saskatchewan, Department of Education, *White Paper on Consolidation and Revision of School Law in the Province of Saskatchewan*, March 1977. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

school boards, and the Fransaskois.³³ In other words, the bill proposed to simply perpetuate the history of assimilation and the 1968 legislation, albeit with some minor changes. Unsurprisingly, the ACFC was not happy with the bill and pressed the government for a clearer, less equivocal education policy that "devra énoncer clairement l'intention du gouvernement d'accepter le caractère propre du Canada (deux peuples fondateurs, deux langues officielles, etc.)."³⁴ It was especially concerning to the ACFC that English remained the sole language of instruction in the province.³⁵ The Fransaskois wanted "pure French schools" where francophones could truly learn the language, not schools designed to teach anglophones how to speak French.³⁶ As the ACFC noted in *The Heirs of Lord Durham*, its 1977 Plan of Action, "...the A.C.F.C.'s goal is to establish a network of schools for francophone pupils with French as the language of instruction and communication."³⁷ The government lacked a clear vision for language education. Don Faris, the Minister of Continuing Education, summed up the fundamental issue: "Does the Government of Saskatchewan want to promote unilingualism, bilingualism (French and English), or multilingualism in education?"³⁸

The Vonda Dispute Begins, 1976-1978

Before Faris' question could be answered, the Vonda-Saskatoon East School Unit dispute underscored the inconsistencies of Saskatchewan's French-language education policies. As francophone parents from Vonda would later remark, the dispute was "a microcosm of French

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Donald Cyr to Ed Tchorzewski, 10 mai 1977. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Doug McGee, "Pure French schools urged," *Star Phoenix*, 30 August 1977.

³⁷ ACFC, "The Heirs of Lord Durham: The Plan of Action," May 1977, 77. Wilfrid Denis, Private Collection.

³⁸ Don Faris to Ed Tchorzewski, 1 April 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

education crises" in Saskatchewan.³⁹ École Providence in the small francophone town of Vonda, under the jurisdiction of the Saskatoon East School Unit, was designated for French-language teaching from grades one to six. The Fransaskois community, however, wished to extend designation for grades seven to twelve starting with grades seven to nine in 1976. The Fransaskois also wanted Vonda to accept francophone students from Prud'homme and St-Denis, forming a regional francophone school that would have the proper environment and enrolment numbers to make it sustainable.⁴⁰ The Saskatoon East School Unit resisted immediately. Citing declining enrolment and rising staff costs, in addition to insufficient funding to support French education, the board said it was simply unfeasible.⁴¹ Saskatoon East also refused to accept Prud'homme francophone students attending high school at Aberdeen because they were part of the neighbouring Wakaw School Unit.⁴²

The Vonda dispute, which flared up in the summer of 1977⁴³ after several months of controversy, could not have come at a worse time for Allan Blakeney. In August 1977 Blakeney was slated to discuss minority language education rights at the 18th Annual Premiers' Conference in New Brunswick. Three weeks before the conference, Blakeney wrote to Cabinet about the need to clarify the Saskatchewan position on French education. He was optimistic: "We have come a long way, since 1971, to providing education in either official language in Saskatchewan."⁴⁴ Blakeney suggested that Saskatchewan continue with its original plan of

³⁹ Commissaires de l'école Providence de Vonda, "News Release. Fransaskois in the Supreme Court of Canada," 30 January 1981. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

⁴⁰ Marcel Guay "French-speaking parents saw education needs ignored," *Leader-Post*, 29 June 1977.

⁴¹ Glen Penner to Ed Tchorzewski, 14 June 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁴² Doug McGee, "Parents, students protest," *Star-Phoenix*, 30 August 1977. Janet Steffenhagen, "French group protests school decision," *Leader-Post*, 30 August 1977.

⁴³ The provincial media kept the public aware of the Fransaskois point of view on education. See for example Marcel Guay, "French-speaking parents say education needs ignored," *The Leader-Post*, June 29 1977; Guay, "Group charges province ignores language rights," *Leader-Post*, 13 August 1977, and Doug McGee, "Parents, students protest," *Star Phoenix*, 30 August 1977.

⁴⁴ Allan Blakeney to Cabinet, 25 July 1977. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

offering French-language education to everyone, regardless of origin.⁴⁵ But the government was careful about how it presented the policy to the public. French was not, Minister of Education Ed Tchorzewski wrote to senior civil servants, an official language in Saskatchewan, nor should the government give any impression that it was.⁴⁶ Any extension of French-language education in the province, he continued, should be couched in terms of national unity and multiculturalism, which would make it politically acceptable.⁴⁷ When the government finally released its policy statement on 28 July 1977, it declared that it supported French education "In keeping with its strong commitment to the fact that Canada is a country of two official languages and to the fact that Saskatchewan is a multicultural society...."⁴⁸ National unity and multiculturalism were the main justifications for French education in the province. Among the four primary objectives underlined for French education, the first was national unity. None of the objectives specifically mentioned supporting the Fransaskois community or arresting francophone assimilation.⁴⁹ Moreover, while the principle of French language education seemed acceptable in Saskatchewan, its application became problematic.

The Fransaskois and Fédération des Francophones hors Quebec (FFHQ) used the St. Andrew's conference to challenge Blakeney and the government on its educational policy. With the help of the FFHQ, the ACFC sent out a "Scandal Dossier" to national media, asking associations representing francophones outside Quebec to send letters to Blakeney and new Education Minister Don Faris to "act definitively in the matter of the stated requirements of Saskatchewan's Francophone community."⁵⁰ "The parents came to realize," the FFHQ charged,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Ed Tchorzewski to Ian Wilson, 27 July 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Saskatchewan, "Policy Statement: Support for Language Education Opportunities in Saskatchewan," 28 July 1977. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ ACFC and FFHQ, "Press Release," 18 August 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

"that education services in french were totally unexistent [sic], and that something had to be done about it."⁵¹ The document alleged that the provincial government was throwing up barriers to French-language education and was not serious about its commitments to the Fransaskois community. It was visceral in its criticism: "Shame on all the provincial governments who dare to declare before all Canadians that the right of Francophones are well protected in their provinces. Nothing could be further from the truth."⁵²

Blakeney was furious. So were top-level civil servants in the Department of Education. Laurence Ready, Associate Deputy Minister, wrote to Don Faris that "I resent the inference that the Saskatchewan government is involved in any kind of plot to deny educational services to Francophones, and that the services provided have been granted begrudgingly 'in driblets'."⁵³ In New Brunswick, Blakeney had to face a storm of reporters. Later in a confidential memo to cabinet he wrote that

Creating a 'national scandal' of a problem in Saskatchewan will serve to feed the fires of separatism. If that is what they want to do, they should continue to magnify Saskatchewan problems and inform the Quebec people that Saskatchewan is unfair to the francophone minority in this province. If the A.C.F.C. is determined to 'feed the fires of separatism', then they must prepare to deal with the actual consequences of Quebec separation. In Saskatchewan, for instance, it is highly unlikely that there would be much sympathy for French language rights if Quebec is no longer in Canada.⁵⁴

With the Premier making comments such as these, perhaps the ACFC could be forgiven for believing that the government did not have the Fransaskois' best interests in mind.⁵⁵

In mid-August 1977 the ACFC, the provincial government, and the Wakaw and Saskatoon East school boards reached an agreement. The children of seven families from the

⁵¹ ACFC and FFHQ, "Scandal Dossier: Prud'Homme, Saskatchewan." 18 August 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁵² FFHQ, "Press Release," 18 August 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁵³ L.M. Ready to Don Faris, 29 August 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁵⁴ Allan Blakeney to Cabinet, 7 October 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁵⁵ The Executive Director of the ACFC, Donald Cyr, for example, accused the government of misspending French-language education funding at a number of public meetings. Ian Wilson to Clotaire Denis, 22 August 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

Prud'homme area would be allowed to attend the school at Vonda.⁵⁶ But the board still refused to extend French designation of the Vonda school beyond grade six. Further, ACFC political activism against the government's educational policy began to poison the organization's relationship with the government. Following the New Brunswick incident, Laurence Ready recommended that the Department of Education cease working with Donald Cyr, the Executive Director of the ACFC. Ready also told the Department to "...re-iterate our desire to co-operate with that Association, provided it acts responsibly. Failing to do this, then it seems to me that we have no alternative but to by-pass l'A.C.F.C..⁵⁷

The Fransaskois remained unhappy with the current educational arrangement for Vonda. In November 1977, the Comité des Parents de la région Prud'homme-St. Denis-Vonda wrote a brief to Don Faris demanding further changes. The problem, according to the parent group, was that the three Fransaskois communities were divided among different school board units which weakened their demographic power within the different boards.⁵⁸ Ad hoc measures, where families and students would be allowed to change school district were not acceptable.⁵⁹ The Comité proposed that the government establish a "sub-unit" board for the Francophones of the region.⁶⁰ This request was important because it marked the beginning of a new, more aggressive Fransaskois activist strategy in education. French-language schools were not enough; the

⁵⁶ Saskatchewan, "Vonda-Prud'homme Agreement Announced," 16 August 1977.

⁵⁷ L.M. Ready to Don Faris, 29 August 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁵⁸ "Mémoire présenté par le Comité des Parents de la région Prud'homme-St. Denis-Vonda au Dr. Don Faris," 12 novembre 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds. As Wilfrid Denis points out the problem of school board limits plagued the Fransaskois community since the *Larger School Unit Act* was adopted in 1944. This law removed school control from small, local boards and vested it in larger, regional boards which "gradually increased the heterogeneity of the student population and ensure de facto domination of English as the common language of instruction and the school-yard." Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 91.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

community wanted a degree of administrative control in order to exercise what the Fransaskois called a fundamental right.⁶¹

Feeling the pressure, the government looked at its options. Executive Council commissioned a poll by Gallup research, asking if respondents supported or opposed French-language education in Saskatchewan. Overall the poll found that 53.6% of Saskatchewanians said "Yes".⁶² Responses, though, varied by age and level of education. "No" answers climbed to 42% and 43% for the 45-54 and 55+ age groups. Respondents with high school education or less answered "No" 49.1% and 42.2% respectively, while university degree holders responded 74.5% "Yes."⁶³ There was a danger that official bilingualism could be portrayed by its opponents as something foisted on others by a well-educated elite. As for Fransaskois school board powers, Don Faris was careful to keep expectations low. The government would take the middle road. In his speech to the ACFC biannual congress in November, Faris did not foresee "the Department of Education establishing a large additional bureaucracy for the administering of French language education in this province. Indeed, it would be quite unjustifiable; what is justifiable are internal modifications in the structure of the Department of Education to reflect the increased emphasis on minority language education...."⁶⁴ ACFC President Irène Chabot wrote to Faris to express the organization's "profound disappointment" with his speech, which in her mind reduced French-language education to "a privilege rather than a right, which can only appear to Francophones as a flagrant injustice and a violation of this province's Constitution."⁶⁵

The cornerstone of Fransaskois political activism was its strong view of the community's history. To the Fransaskois, French education and official bilingualism were not privileges; they

⁶¹ Rupert Baudais, "French education called fundamental right," *Star Phoenix*, 14 Novembre 1977.

⁶² Russ Eaton to Robert Weese, 4 January 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Don Faris, "Speech to ACFC Congress," 12 Novembre 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁶⁵ Irène Chabot à Don Faris, 5 décembre 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds. My translation.

were rights derived from the bilingual character of western Canadian history.⁶⁶ The current system of English-speaking government or school board control over education simply did not correspond to how the Fransaskois community viewed French-language education. In a February 1978 press release the ACFC declared that designated schools were not enough:

Necessary administrative structures are imperative if a minimal effectiveness in French language teaching in Saskatchewan schools is to be ensured. The French Canadian Cultural Association's recommendations were presented to the Saskatoon School Board with the intention of the latter adopting the Association's position. This brief presents the historical background to linguistic rights and passed school legislation, showing that in 1866 these rights were respected and recognized; thereafter, these rights were eroded, and finally, suppressed. Today, they have been partially restored and considered to be a privilege rendered rather than a right.⁶⁷

French in Saskatchewan, the ACFC charged, had "the status of a permitted language, without any official recognition."⁶⁸ The government's lack of seriousness in all things French, the ACFC continued, was evident in how it carried out bilingualism in education.

As Saskatchewan prepared to enact a major new piece of education legislation (Bill 22) in April 1978, Chabot wrote to Faris that

Bill 22 does not recognize the bilingual character of Canada. French is not recognized, along with English, as an official language of instruction, in the very spirit of the federal Official Languages Act. To respect Canada's duality, section (1) of paragraph 180 should read: "English or French shall be the language of instruction in schools," and other sections should be reworded accordingly.⁶⁹

Chabot and the Fransaskois would indeed be sorely disappointed by the legislation. bill 22 made what the government called "a minor statutory change." The change in language was subtle, but nonetheless important. "Students have the right" to attend designated schools became "students

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ ACFC, "Communiqué de presse: French Education," 15 February 1978. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

⁶⁸ "Full recognition for French urged," *Star Phoenix*, 16 February 1978.

⁶⁹ Irène Chabot to Don Faris, 12 April 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

shall be entitled."⁷⁰ It was actually a step backwards; the government did not want to use the word "right," and give the impression that a bilingual education was a right in the province. It explicitly endorsed the educational status quo: "In summary, this proposal does not make French an official language...It does use the existing designated program. This minimizes the impact of the changes, and yet emphasizes our desire to do this in a reasonable manner."⁷¹

The Fransaskois were not the only group with major reservations about the new legislation. The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA) feared that new provisions for French education, including those dealing with school boundaries and transportation of students, were eroding school board powers.⁷² "The bureaucracy of the civil service is too strong now without being granted such boundless power in law," the Association wrote.⁷³ The SSTA believed that control over education should remain in the hands of boards and communities, not the minister, and that no changes to boundaries or school designations should occur without board approval.⁷⁴ With the Fransaskois eager to expand French education and boards jealous of their statutory power, the stage was set for major conflicts over the establishment and delivery of French education.

Designated Schools in Question: The Vonda Dispute Becomes a Political Crisis, 1978

In May 1978, the new education provisions became law.⁷⁵ Why did the provincial government continue down its established path for French-language education when both the Fransaskois community and school boards were displeased with it? The answer lies in the

⁷⁰ Saskatchewan, "Department of Education Position Paper on French Language Education Policy," 25 April 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷² James Walker, "Southwest trustees oppose Bill 22," *Leader Post*, 4 April 1978.

⁷³ Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, "Brief prepared by the North Central Branch of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association," 26 May 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Wayne Lowrie, "MLAs approve controversial new education bill," *Star Phoenix*, 5 May 1978.

implications of education policy for the political community. Nationally, Saskatchewan wanted to make "its best efforts to provide French language instruction, wherever numbers warrant...and demonstrate Saskatchewan's readiness to contribute to national unity, despite a small and dispersed francophone population."⁷⁶ Provincially, however, the government was concerned with "radical francophones" and "extremist members of other ethnic groups who may see this as 'pandering to the French'."⁷⁷ The government regarded its position as striking a balance between these competing provincial and national challenges. As such, the middle road approach seemed the wisest, especially with Saskatchewan poised to have a provincial election at either the end of 1978 or early in 1979. But the middle road caused relations to break down between the Fransaskois and Allan Blakeney's government because neither side was willing to compromise on its vision for French-language education. The government grew especially impatient and exasperated with Fransaskois criticisms of the designated school system, which the community argued was exemplary of everything that was wrong with the government's approach to education.

In May 1978, the Comité des Parents de la région Prud'homme-St. Denis-Vonda met again with the Saskatoon East School Unit to discuss extending French-language instruction at Vonda past grade six. The board suggested, following an idea pitched by the civil service in 1977⁷⁸, that rather than extending the program at Vonda the Fransaskois students attend school at Aberdeen, just outside of Saskatoon.⁷⁹ In 1978, however, barely a few weeks after the new *Education Act* was enacted, the Saskatchewan civil service recommended something different to Don Faris: "that the Department and the Minister support the principle that the Division III

⁷⁶ Saskatchewan, "Department of Education Position Paper on French Language Education Policy," 25 April 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ L.M. Ready to Ian J. Wilson, 20 June 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁷⁹ Peter Dyck to File, 19 May 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

program would be more appropriately placed in Vonda."⁸⁰ Not only was the government sending out mixed messages to the school board, it was also concerned about the deficiencies of the 1978 legislation: "On matters such as this does the provincial government have a responsibility for making a final decision or is it the sole responsibility of the fiscally responsible school board?"⁸¹

At the end of May, the ACFC submitted a brief to the province, asking for a number of measures to end assimilation of francophones. "Francophones in Saskatchewan," the brief argued, "have been deprived of an educational system favourable to the development of their identity as francophones."⁸² The ACFC reminded the government that "[it] aims at a network of schools in which the language of communication and of instruction will be the French language except for the English language arts which is to be taught in English."⁸³ Unfortunately, the ACFC argued, French-language education was still a privilege in Saskatchewan rather than a right. The community required direct participation in education policies and if the government refused to help, "our politicians will have to bear the weight of a decision whose irreversible consequences will be judged by history as genocide."⁸⁴

Officials in the Department of Education took a different view of the brief. They were not about to let the ACFC dictate Saskatchewan education policy. Laurence Ready, already losing patience with the Fransaskois, wrote to Don Faris that "If l'A.C.F.C. is going to use [the FFHQ] which is committed to militancy and confrontation to promote its objectives in Saskatchewan, then the value of continuing consultation with l'A.C.F.C. may well be questioned."⁸⁵ Ready also downplayed the right to French education in Saskatchewan: "The Constitution of Canada does

⁸⁰ Ken Kirby to Don Faris, 26 May 1978. *[PAS]*, D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² ACFC, "Brief presented to the Government of Saskatchewan in Regina," 31 May 1978. *[PAS]*, D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ L.M. Ready to Don Faris, 30 May 1978. *[PAS]*, D.L. Faris Fonds.

not guarantee the right to education in the French language."⁸⁶ Finally, he recommended that the Minister dismiss any ACFC demands to review the new education law since the government had just finished consolidating the province's legislation. From this point on the Department of Education was generally hostile to the ACFC and had little time for criticisms of its established policies. The Fransaskois would take what they were offered, or they would get nothing at all.

Don Faris and a cabinet committee did, however, sit down to discuss the brief with the Fransaskois. It was a tense meeting. Minister of Culture and Youth Ned Shillington noted that "We, the ministers involved, reacted luke-warmly to the discussion...."⁸⁷ The government agreed to increase funding to the ACFC but refused to acquiesce to one of their key demands -- the establishment of an "Official Minority Office" that would report directly to cabinet and the premier on Fransaskois issues. Recognizing French as equal with English in education was out of the question. Furthermore, Saskatchewan would not revisit its education policies even though the Fransaskois denounced the government's French-language education system. The government was firm in defending its vision of French-language education access "to ALL CITIZENS in Saskatchewan, anglophones and francophones alike."⁸⁸ The new legislation, Faris argued, simultaneously fulfilled the government's obligations to the Fransaskois community and the entire province by making French-language education universal, not just for francophones.⁸⁹

The ACFC panned the government's position as hypocritical.⁹⁰ Blakeney's declarations on bilingualism and national unity, Irène Chabot explained, did not match his track record on provincial bilingualism.⁹¹ The May 1978 editorial of *L'Eau Vive* argued that on national unity,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Ned Shillington to Bob Weese, 5 June 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁸⁸ Saskatchewan, "Notes taken at a meeting between a committee of Cabinet and l'Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan," 31 May 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Irène Chabot to Allan Blakeney, 13 June 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

French-language education, and provincial bilingualism, Blakeney was saying one thing and meaning another entirely:

Tout en reconnaissant la minorité française, du même trait de plume il refuse de reconnaître la minorité française dans sa province...une société bilingue doit reposer sur une égalité entre les deux groupes fondateurs...Ce refus de laisser vivre trouve son expression dans le refus d'un système d'écoles françaises, dans le refus de proclamer le français comme langue officielle, dans le refus de contribuer moralement et financièrement au développement des communautés françaises, dans le refus de mécanismes tels qu'un service d'éducation de langue française (SELF) ou d'un bureau de la minorité officielle, etc..⁹²

The same day that the Fransaskois submitted their brief and met with the provincial government, Don Faris also met with Glen Penner, Superintendent of the Saskatoon East School Unit, to discuss the Vonda situation. The news was bad. "Saskatoon East Board presently 'is adamant not to put grades seven to nine back into Vonda'," Faris noted.⁹³ He also worried that the ACFC would continue to try to bypass the school board by appealing to the Department of Education to impose a solution.⁹⁴ Faris was stuck between unclear legislation, board autonomy, and the Fransaskois who refused to accept the board's offer to move the students to Aberdeen and also accused Faris of siding with the board.⁹⁵

Fransaskois activism yielded some results. Faris and the Department of Education agreed to sit down with the Saskatoon East board and the Comité des parents in mid-June. French teaching needed to be extended at Vonda, the ACFC argued, because "We have everything to lose...Designation at Aberdeen would benefit the anglophones. There is a need for a French atmosphere which is not possible at Aberdeen."⁹⁶ Any hopes that the Fransaskois community once had for improvements in French education were dashed "After ten years' experience we

⁹² "L'honorable Blakeney: favorable aux minorités françaises?," *L'Eau Vive*, mai 1978.

⁹³ Don Faris to File, 31 May 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Laurent Rioux to Don Ferguson, 31 May 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

⁹⁶ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, "Meeting of representatives of Department of Education, Saskatoon East School Unit Board and Vonda-St. Denis parents," 14 June 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

realize the inadequacies of the present system and we are not satisfied."⁹⁷ But the board refused to alter its stance, while the department affirmed that it would not overrule the board.⁹⁸ At the end of the minutes, a worried Faris wrote that the issue was "larger than Vonda".⁹⁹ But he was unsure whether the Department of Education had the statutory power to overrule the board.¹⁰⁰ The deficiencies of the 1978 legislation remained apparent.

The Department of Education quietly tried putting pressure on the Saskatoon East school board. Deputy Minister Ian Wilson wrote to the board: "We share the doubts and reservations of the Vonda parent's group about the limited francophone environment for the children attending the designated program for Division III at Aberdeen."¹⁰¹ Wilson proposed a compromise: that the francophone students attend Aberdeen for one year (1978-79) while the board have a new school built and program set up at Vonda for the 1979 school year.¹⁰² Again, the board refused as it was determined to expand the French program at Aberdeen rather than in Vonda.¹⁰³

Was the Saskatoon East School board against French-language education for the Fransaskois? There is little evidence demonstrating an overtly anti-Fransaskois bias in the board's actions. The board, however, did not understand why the Fransaskois valued francophone education so highly.¹⁰⁴ Board Superintendent Glen Penner had a strong influence on other board members, convincing others "that the Francophone pressure groups have no limits to their future

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ I.J. Wilson to W.J. Boechler, 19 June 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Isabel Johnson to I.J. Wilson, 21 June 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹⁰⁴ Department of Education, "Policy Statement: Support for Language Education Opportunities in Saskatchewan," 28 July 1977; Department of Education, "Minority Language Education in Saskatchewan," September 1977. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds; Saskatchewan, Department of Education, "Position Paper on French Language Education Policy," 14 February 1978. [PAS], Roy Romanow Fonds.

demands, and no appreciation of what the Board is doing for them now."¹⁰⁵ Discussions between the two groups were certainly strained. On 29 June the Comité de parents wrote a long brief to the Department of Education, complaining that the board was acting in bad faith and had no real justification for refusing to extend designation at Vonda.¹⁰⁶ As an illustration of the board's treatment of the francophone community, the Committee described its attempts to evaluate the proposed designation at Aberdeen:

Mr. Penner asked the principal of Aberdeen to send a letter to the parents of the Vonda grade 6 students asking them to bring their children to the school in Aberdeen for a visit since grade 7 would be there next year. Le Comité d'Action asked for this to be postponed until after the 14th, but this was refused...The following day Mr. Penner cancelled the visit, but put the burden on Sister Maria to advise the parents. That same day, June 5th, Mr. Kyle spent half a day in the Vonda school trying to argue Sister Maria in using her influence to convince the parents to send their children to Aberdeen. She told us it was worse than being in court. These, gentlemen, describe the situation we the parents of Vonda-St. Denis face.¹⁰⁷

Both sides were at an impasse. The Fransaskois went public with their grievances against the government and the board. Gustave Dubois, recently hired by the ACFC to work towards developing and furthering French education in Saskatchewan, told the media: "The government of Saskatchewan is not putting its money where its mouth is...Premier Blakeney has made widely publicized statements about Quebec and national unity, but he is doing next to nothing for francophones in Saskatchewan who are dying out as a distinct people."¹⁰⁸ Designated schools and the current arrangement in Saskatchewan, Dubois explained, were failing the francophone community.¹⁰⁹ These comments raised the ire of Laurence Ready, who threatened to cut funding

¹⁰⁵ I.J. Wilson to Wes Bolstad, 29 June 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁰⁶ Vonda-Prud'homme Parents' Committee, "Brief on the situation of the regional designated school," 29 June 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Dubois' position with the ACFC was partially financed by the Department of Education and the federal Secretary of State. Tim Lilburn, "Les Fransaskois struggle to live," *Prairie Messenger*, 11 June 1978.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

for the position if Dubois continued to create trouble.¹¹⁰ Irène Chabot wrote to Don Faris, calling Ready's letter "blackmail" and denouncing the Department of Education's approach to dealing with the ACFC:

I regret to have to address you regarding your senior civil servants. Last year, Mr. Wilson warned the Executive Director of our association not to criticize the policies of the Department of Education if the A.C.F.C. wished to obtain financial support for the employment of an Education Development officer. If cooperating with the Department means being in agreement with the shortcomings of program development for designated schools, with the absence of a global policy for French language and culture community development, with the absence of structures within the Department of Education, and with the proposed school legislation, never, Mr. Minister, will we be able to submit to such injustices toward Saskatchewan's official language minority group.¹¹¹

Faris' caustic reply shows the extent to which relations between the ACFC and the government were crumbling:

Quite frankly, I have to conclude that you and the Executive Director of l'A.C.F.C. do not fully appreciate the time and effort that senior officials in the Department of Education devote to problems and issues relating to the improvement of opportunities for French-language education in Saskatchewan. I have to conclude also that you and your Executive Director have not differentiated between constructive criticism and irresponsible criticism. To offer criticism that is constructive is one thing; to make irresponsible public statements such as those made by Mr. Dubois in the June 11, 1978 issue of the Prairie Messenger is something else. What you and your Executive Director fail to understand is that one of the major problems facing officials in the Department of Education is the negative attitude of non-francophones toward the goals of your Association. Irresponsible, inaccurate and misleading statements such as those made by Mr. Dubois only serve to reinforce these negative attitudes.¹¹²

In order to avoid public embarrassment, the government sent out a press release blaming the board and the committee for the impasse and appointed a mediator to get the two sides talking

¹¹⁰ L.M. Ready to Donald Cyr, 21 June 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹¹¹ Irène Chabot to Don Faris, 11 July 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹¹² Don Faris to Irène Chabot, 31 July 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

again.¹¹³ In private meetings with the ACFC, the government again asked the organization to stop criticizing the province publicly and in return it would hold regular meetings in order to better co-ordinate policy.¹¹⁴

Mediation worked. It ended the Vonda designated school dispute at the beginning of August 1978 with the Fransaskois agreeing to send their children to Aberdeen for the 1978-79 school year on condition that the government and Saskatoon East board build a new school at Vonda, guarantee transportation to Aberdeen, and extend the designated program at Vonda from grades seven to nine.¹¹⁵ The government reached a deal with the board mid-August to help build a new school and extend designation at Vonda immediately for grade seven, while grade nine instruction would be ready by 1980.¹¹⁶

Vonda Redux: The Dispute Returns, 1979-1980

Despite the acrimony and tensions between the government, the Saskatoon East board, and the Fransaskois, the Vonda dispute came to a reasonable end. But if the Fransaskois believed that the government would grant them some leeway in education because of their compromise on the Vonda dispute, they would once again be disappointed. The community had publicly criticized the Premier, embarrassed the government, and openly defied the Department of Education.¹¹⁷ Looking back on the previous weeks, Don Faris wrote to senior civil servant Howard Leeson that in the future "it is my judgment that Cabinet will be taking a firm, if low-

¹¹³ Saskatchewan, Department of Education, "Press Release: Saskatoon East School Unit and Vonda Parents' Committee Reject Department of Education Proposals," 4 July 1978; "Mediator named in school dispute," *Star Phoenix*, 8 July 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹¹⁴ Saskatchewan, "Meeting of Howard Leeson, Bob Weese and Campbell Gordon with Donald Cyr of ACFC," 25 July 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹¹⁵ Arthur Denis à Don Faris, 31 juillet 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds; "Report prepared in language dispute," *Star Phoenix*, 2 August 1978; Dr. F.J. Gathercole to Don Faris, 2 August 1978, [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹¹⁶ "Plan prepared for French instruction," *Leader Post*, 17 August 1978.

¹¹⁷ Bede Hubbard, "French fight for Sask. school rights," *Prairie Messenger*, 7 September 1978.

key, position on its Francophone policies, particularly with respect to Francophone education...."¹¹⁸

The Allan Blakeney NDP returned to power in the October 1978 election and soon after set to work on new regulations for the *Education Act*. Some civil servants in the Department of Education pointed to the deficiencies in the legislation and the government's vision of universal access to French-language education as opposed to Fransaskois education: "...regulations and legislation placed too great an emphasis on accessibility rather than on the local availability of all forms of language instruction. I pointed out that we were trying to respond to a perceived need for certain sorts of service rather than attempting to create a need."¹¹⁹ But the new regulations were a major disappointment to the ACFC which wanted to see clearly defined rights rather than permissive statutory powers in education. The organization argued that it had been shut out of consultations¹²⁰ and that the regulations, like the legislation itself, placed no real obligations on the minister or school boards, instead granting permissive powers to both.¹²¹ The original deficiencies that had caused so many problems between 1968 and 1978 remained; moreover, French-language education was still not a right in Saskatchewan.

Blakeney realized that from a public relations point of view that the ACFC should at least be included in consultations on any new regulations.¹²² In February 1979, the ACFC submitted yet another brief to Ned Shillington, the new education minister. Recalling the painful history of education in Saskatchewan, the brief again demanded that the government draft a clear French-language education policy and that the Fransaskois be granted control over francophone-only

¹¹⁸ Don Faris to Howard Leeson, 29 August 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹¹⁹ J. Hurnard to File, 10 November 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹²⁰ Irène Chabot to Allan Blakeney, 8 November 1978 and 30 November 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹²¹ ACFC, "Une première étude de la première ébauche des règlements par rapport à l'Article 180 du nouvel acte scolaire," novembre 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹²² Allan Blakeney to Irène Chabot, 13 December 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

schools.¹²³ It also asked that French be recognized as a language of instruction equal to English.¹²⁴ Building on the lessons from the Vonda dispute, the brief denounced the government's refusal to help the Fransaskois community deal with recalcitrant school boards:

The principle of local autonomy, it is well known, works against a harmonious development of a French-language educational network. On boards of education, Francophones are either not represented or very much in a minority situation. As a result, Francophones have no control over decisions which affect them directly.¹²⁵

Officials in the Department of Education, however, were still handcuffed by legislative limits placed on the minister. Ned Shillington was so unsure of his power to make changes to French-language education that he wrote to Howard Leeson, Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, to have his department clear things up with Department of Education civil servants about the *Education Act*.¹²⁶ "The limits imposed by Section 180," Shillington wrote, "are moderately clear, however, government policy respecting the direction and emphasis which can be or should be placed on regulations is not."¹²⁷ The confusion led Shillington to tell the ACFC that no discussions or changes to legislation could be made because government did not know what the implications of the law and regulations were.¹²⁸ The government was increasingly certain that it could not, and would not, bypass local school boards in implementing French-language programs.¹²⁹

At the end of 1979 the Vonda situation became more complicated when the local Ukrainian community formed its own parents committee to request Ukrainian language instruction at Aberdeen. Why was French being favoured over other languages? "Saskatchewan,"

¹²³ ACFC, "Brief presented to the Minister of Education, Honourable Ned Shillington," 15 February 1979. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Ned Shillington to Howard Leeson, 20 February 1979. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Ned Shillington to Irène Chabot, 20 February 1979. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹²⁹ Valorie Preston to Allan Blakeney, 2 March 1979. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds; Howard Leeson to Allan Blakeney, 7 March 1979. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

it declared, "is a truly multi-cultural society, since no racial group forms the majority."¹³⁰ Saskatoon East school board refused to consider the proposal since it represented a slippery multicultural slope. It was already busy expanding French-language education at Aberdeen and believed that if Ukrainian was permitted, German would follow.¹³¹ The Ukrainian Parents Committee asked the Minister to intervene and told the board that "It is our view that in a multi-ethnic area like Aberdeen, it would make good sense to have all three languages: German, French and Ukrainian made available to interested students."¹³² But the Ukrainians, like the Fransaskois, ran into trouble with the board and asked Attorney General Roy Romanow for help.¹³³ Romanow was well-connected and popular in the Ukrainian community and often took care of political issues involving them. Eventually Romanow was able to convince the Saskatoon East Board to implement a Ukrainian language program at Aberdeen to the satisfaction of the parents committee.¹³⁴

Conflict between the Fransaskois and the Saskatoon East School board over the Vonda school boiled over again in August 1980. Saskatoon East cancelled Grade 10 to 12 classes for Vonda graduates at Aberdeen school, citing low enrolment and little interest in the French program.¹³⁵ Liguori LeBlanc, trustee and chairman of the Vonda school board, argued that the government was violating the 1978 agreement between the government, francophone community, and Saskatoon East.¹³⁶ A vocal advocate of Fransaskois education, LeBlanc argued

¹³⁰ Ukrainian Parents Committee, "A Brief Presented to the Aberdeen School Board of Education. A Need for Change Towards Second Language Instruction," 28 November 1979. [PAS], Roy Romanow Fonds.

¹³¹ Irene Sopatyk et al. to Saskatoon East School Division No. 41, 19 February 1980. [PAS], Roy Romanow Fonds; Oran Reiman to Peter Dyck, 28 February 1980. [PAS], Roy Romanow Fonds.

¹³² Ukrainian Parents Committee to Doug McArthur, 19 February 1980. [PAS], Roy Romanow Fonds; Ukrainian Parents Committee, "Presentation to Saskatoon (East) School Board of Education. Ukrainian for Second Language Instruction," 16 April 1980. [PAS], Roy Romanow Fonds.

¹³³ Irene Sopatyk to Roy Romanow, 29 May 1980. [PAS], Roy Romanow Fonds.

¹³⁴ Irene Sopatyk to Glen Penner, 29 January 1981. [PAS], Roy Romanow Fonds.

¹³⁵ Eva Schacherl, "French schools, rural board conflict surfaces again," *Star Phoenix*, 11 August 1980.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

that the Aberdeen arrangement was not perfect -- the Fransaskois wanted a kindergarten to grade 12 francophone school at Vonda -- but it was better than nothing.¹³⁷ The Saskatoon East board, for its part, blamed the problem on the Vonda francophone parents' committee for making unreasonable demands; it also cited the introduction of a new Ukrainian language program which increased staffing costs.¹³⁸

It was the last straw for the ACFC, who demanded that the new education Minister Doug McArthur set up a francophone school board to run all the French-language designated schools in the province because English speakers simply did not understand the Fransaskois' needs.¹³⁹ McArthur dismissed the idea on the grounds that it would further fragment the province's education system.¹⁴⁰ The Regina *Leader Post* aptly described the challenge the government faced, including the possibility of an "anglophone backlash":

Even with provincial money budgeted for multicultural programming, it's not hard to imagine anglophone jealousy at increasing amounts of money directed at francophones - a community numbering fewer than 30,000. On the other hand, the government can't afford to ignore Saskatchewan francophones' special educational needs either. They're vocal, well-organized, and in a country that's officially considered bicultural - they have political significance beyond their small numbers. Whatever steps the department takes in the area of French education, it's likely to risk offending somebody.¹⁴¹

As in 1978, it was a question of who would compromise first. The Saskatoon East board offered to send the grades 10 to 12 Vonda students to Holy Cross High School in Saskatoon by bus, or pay for the costs to send the francophones to Collège Mathieu in Gravelbourg; the Fransaskois refused, calling this idea "a non-offer" and "trinkets and whiskey."¹⁴²

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Matt Bellan, "Francophones say anglophones aren't abiding by Education Act," *Leader Post*, 12 August 1980.

¹³⁹ Matt Bellan, "McArthur may have problem in decision on francophones," *Regina Leader-Post*, 21 August 1980.

¹⁴⁰ "McArthur rejects idea of French school board," *Leader Post*, 14 August 1980.

¹⁴¹ Matt Bellan, "McArthur may have problem in decision on francophones," *Regina Leader-Post*, 21 August 1980.

¹⁴² Eva Schacherl, "Rural parents reject French school compromises," *Star Phoenix*, 28 August 1980.

Negotiations broke down and the Fransaskois turned to the courts in order to compel the board to offer grades 10 to 12 in French at Vonda.¹⁴³ It was the first time the judiciary would be asked to weigh in on Saskatchewan's new *Education Act*. Liguori LeBlanc requested an order from the court forcing the Saskatoon East School Unit to implement a French program for grades K to 12, to reinstate the French program at Aberdeen, and to hire an additional teacher for Vonda.¹⁴⁴ In order to help finance the legal challenge, the ACFC launched "Opération solidarité" which took donations from the community and sought to create Fransaskois interest in "la question scolaire de façon qu'ils puissent se sensibiliser davantage...et en se solidarissant par delà les distances qu'ils parviendront à se donner les outils indispensables à leur survivance."¹⁴⁵ The ACFC also used the media to criticize Allan Blakeney and the provincial government, saying that French-language rights were used as a "bargaining tool" by Saskatchewan in constitutional negotiations when nothing was being done for the Fransaskois at home.¹⁴⁶ Again, Irène Chabot underlined the need for French school boards and francophone control over education:

The lack of a French school board means Saskatchewan parents who supposedly have the right to choose the language of instruction for their child are in fact subjected to the total prerogative of anglophone school boards, which are more or less incited, without being compelled, to respond to the demands of the parents.¹⁴⁷

The Court of Queen's Bench handed down its ruling in October 1980. In his decision, Judge Ken Halvorson sided with Saskatoon East and the government. Halvorson explained that the Vonda parents had not formalized their request to the board for grades 10 to 12 instruction: the board, therefore, was not obligated to do anything.¹⁴⁸ Halvorson also interpreted the

¹⁴³ "Vonda school board files suit," *Star Phoenix*, 5 September 1980.

¹⁴⁴ See *R. v. Saskatoon East School Division Number 41*, [1980] SKCA 7446, 2-3.

¹⁴⁵ ACFC, "Opération Solidarité: Campagne provinciale de Fonds," 19 septembre 1980. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

¹⁴⁶ "Francophones reveal outline of demands," *Leader Post*, 9 September 1980.

¹⁴⁷ Paul Morgan, "Constitutional guarantees urged by francophones," *Star Phoenix*, 10 September 1980.

¹⁴⁸ *R v. Saskatoon East School Division No. 41*, [1980] SKQB 806, 6.

Education Act regulations as permissive. The *Act* did not oblige the Minister to designate any schools for French-language teaching:

Upon a review of regulation 32.2 in its entirety, it is abundantly clear firstly, that the Minister owes a duty thereunder to the Crown and not to the applicant, and secondly, that his function is discretionary. 32.2(1) refers to 'recommendation of the minister', 32.2(2) reads 'the minister may make a recommendation...where a request...has been submitted...by a board....'; regulation 32.3(5) states that 'a school shall be designated....if the minister is satisfied'. The use of the words 'recommendation', 'may', and 'satisfied' all suggest discretion rather than a mandatory duty.¹⁴⁹

On appeal, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal also sided with the board and the government. Justice R.N. Hall explained that, according to the *Education Act* regulations, even if Saskatoon East wanted to designate grades 10 to 12 as French in Vonda, the board was powerless to do so. It could only ask the government to designate the school, and the minister would decide which specific grades would have French-language instruction.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Hall argued, under the *Education Act*, the last word remained with the minister and the Crown, not with Mr. LeBlanc. The government had no obligation to provide any French-language education anywhere.¹⁵¹

A stubborn Department of Education, inadequate legislation that kept French-language education firmly in the hands of school boards and the minister, and a government refusing to change its course were enough proof to the Fransaskois that nothing had changed for French-language education in Saskatchewan. Since the founding of the ACFC it had to fight to have French education. 1980 was no different.¹⁵² Dismayed by their loss in Court, the Vonda school trustees sent out a press release denouncing the government's legislation:

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *R. v. Saskatoon East School Division Number 41*, [1980] SKCA 7446, 6.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² The despair with which the Fransaskois community viewed the situation is palpable in the briefing the ACFC submitted to the Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada. "En 1980, les Fransaskois n'ont toujours aucun droit dans la loi scolaire et le statut officiel du français demeure controversé...Ce qui blesse le plus profondément, c'est la question des droits scolaires. Il faut bien réaliser qu'en Saskatchewan, les écoles françaises n'existent pas et les commissions scolaires françaises encore bien moins." ACFC, "Mémoire présenté au Comité spécial mixte du

...the judgment handed down by Judge R.N. Hall of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal clearly shows that the provisions for French education in the present Saskatchewan Education act are meaningless. This judgment as well as that handed down by Judge Halvorson...prove definitively that any right or even privilege to French education in Saskatchewan does not exist. The irony of the situation is that successive Ministers of Education as well as Premier Blakeney have insisted that the new education act would take proper care of the educational needs of the Fransaskois. These people have in the past accused us of being ungrateful for not appreciating the great efforts they have been making on our behalf. Furthermore, Premier Blakeney has attempted to portray himself as a leading father of the renewed Confederation, all the while denying Francophones in his own front yard the most basic rights to education.¹⁵³

As much as Allan Blakeney and the provincial government tried to convince the public and the Fransaskois that they were making progress on French-language education, the Vonda issue confirmed that it was simply not the case. As Liguori LeBlanc put it, "any right or even privilege to French education in Saskatchewan does not exist."¹⁵⁴

Premier Allan Blakeney made little mention of his beliefs on French-language education or official bilingualism in his political memoirs. His only statements are ambivalent:

But I did favour putting into the Constitution English and French language rights. This might help to prevent Canada from descending into two very distinct language solitudes and so making the country even more difficult to govern. I did not like the idea of embedding language rights in a charter of rights and freedoms, but I understood the pure political argument for doing so.¹⁵⁵

His comment about negotiating minority language education during constitutional discussions demonstrated his fear of political fallout for going too far to help out the francophones:

Saskatchewan and several other provinces were prepared to have the federal government, with as much agreement as they would get from Quebec, sort out the intricacies of minority language education rights. I remember having a private conversation with Premier Davis and Mr. Trudeau on this point. My closing comment was, 'All right, but be it on your head'.¹⁵⁶

Sénat et de la Chambre des communes sur la Constitution du Canada," novembre 1980. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁵³ Commissaires de l'École Providence de Vonda, "News Release: Francophone Students Denied Education," 28 November 1980. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

¹⁵⁴ Paul Morgan, "French education rights said non-existent in Saskatchewan," *Star Phoenix*, 29 November 1980.

¹⁵⁵ Blakeney, *An Honourable Calling*, 177.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

Blakeney was known by those closest to him to be a man of deep values -- a "principled pragmatist" who understood the Saskatchewan political community. Blakeney enjoyed the fine details of policy but was also well-versed in political philosophy and British institutions. He was not, however, overly interested in abstract notions of language rights. A month after the appeal court decision on Vonda, for example, Blakeney and the provincial cabinet met with the ACFC. Upset with the outcome of the Vonda dispute, the ACFC pressed Blakeney to give a firm commitment to when and where Fransaskois children were entitled by right to an education in French. Blakeney replied that

to an Anglo-Saxon mind such as his, it was not a matter of what someone said his rights are, he is interested only in how they affect his life. He pointed out that charters exist all over the world with glowing rights written for people which don't mean a thing in practical terms. Mr. Blakeney noted that linguistic rights are not human rights. He said that the phrase 'where numbers warrant' is necessary because in practical terms he believes that's the way it will be and he does not want to promise more than he can deliver.¹⁵⁷

Given Blakeney's own memoirs, in addition to his statements and arguments with the ACFC, it is reasonable to conclude that he was not keenly interested in constitutionally protecting French-language education rights in Saskatchewan with a written constitution or statement of principle. He preferred to keep things practical and allow the legislature and cabinet to decide, ultimately allowing for greater flexibility. But the Fransaskois, especially Liguori LeBlanc, had another interpretation. Following the meeting, LeBlanc bluntly told Blakeney "It is obvious that the Fransaskois have no right to a French education in Saskatchewan."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Saskatchewan, "Notes taken at a meeting between Cabinet and the French Canadian Cultural Association of Saskatchewan," 17 December 1980. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁵⁸ Liguori LeBlanc to Allan Blakeney, 19 December 1980. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds; Leblanc, "La loi scolaire: une auto sans moteur," *L'Eau Vive*, 4 février 1981.

LeBlanc and the Vonda trustees sought leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada as a last-ditch challenge to the government and the Saskatoon East board.¹⁵⁹ On 17 February 1981, the Supreme Court of Canada dismissed the request.¹⁶⁰ It was the final defeat in the Vonda dispute, the last chance for the Fransaskois to have French education according to their own vision.

In many ways the Vonda dispute was a microcosm of French-language education problems in Saskatchewan. The provincial government, unwilling to come out clearly in favour of French-language education in Saskatchewan, retained control over French education.¹⁶¹ The government refused to help the Fransaskois by taking leadership when the community asked for help in dealing with difficult school boards. As the Vonda-Saskatoon East Central dispute demonstrated, the long history of "education as assimilation" -- originally articulated best by Clifford Sifton -- was difficult to overcome. Even though the 1968 and 1978 amendments to educational legislation seemed part of a new openness to French, in reality the government had little interest in the Fransaskois vision for education.

Wither French School Governance? The Aftermath of the Vonda Dispute (1981 to 1982)

The 1968 to 1981 period proved to the Fransaskois that even with seemingly positive changes to language education in Saskatchewan, the government wished to maintain control over French-language education based on a vision of universal access rather than francophone cultural survival. During a speech in Saskatoon in March 1981, Irène Chabot noted that the bitterness of

¹⁵⁹ Paul Morgan, "High court appeal studied in French classes dispute," *Star Phoenix*, 10 December 1980; Commissaires de l'École Providence de Vonda, "News Release: Vonda going to the Supreme Court," 12 January 1981. [PAS], CCF Fonds; Commissaires de l'École Providence de Vonda, "News Release: Fransaskois in the Supreme Court of Canada," 30 January 1981. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

¹⁶⁰ ACFC, "Communiqué de presse: la Cour Suprême rejette la requête des gens de Vonda Saskatchewan," 17 février 1981. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

¹⁶¹ Wilfrid Denis referred to this reality as "Hegemony through co-optation." Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 91-95.

the past decade, especially the outcome of the Vonda dispute, only further underscored the "nécessité d'une commission scolaire française."¹⁶² The ACFC was not ready to give up, and Chabot argued that one of the next major political projects for the ACFC was francophone control over its own French-language schools.¹⁶³ The Fransaskois believed that it was possible and could be realized with a number of different strategies: refusing to pay school taxes, establishing a francophone board without government permission, or pushing the minister to establish one legally.¹⁶⁴

They first focused its efforts on the minister. According to the ACFC, the *Education Act* was a double-edged sword; although it centralized French-language education within the hands of the minister, it contained the possibility of the minister unilaterally establishing a French board. It might be possible for the community to compel the minister, through negotiations and high-level political pressure, to establish a francophone board. Since the Vonda dispute the provincial government had agreed to meet occasionally with the ACFC in order to resolve any conflicts or questions about French-language education. The government also wanted to avoid further public battles with the Fransaskois, which might weaken Saskatchewan's position during constitutional discussions. The ACFC would use these meetings to see how far the new Minister of Education Doug McArthur was willing to go. McArthur, a young, intelligent, and energetic minister, was keen on developing positive relations with the Fransaskois. Convincing the minister was a long shot, but one that the Fransaskois were willing to try. In June 1981 the Association des commissaires des écoles franco-canadiens de la Saskatchewan (ACEFC) met with McArthur to discuss the possibility of establishing a francophone board. According to the

¹⁶² "Un nouveau défi pour les Fransaskois," *L'Eau Vive*, 18 mars 1981.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Jean-Pierre Proulx, "La leçon de Vonda," *L'Eau Vive*, 18 mars 1981; Suzanne Charland, "Une commission scolaire francophone est réalisable," *L'Eau Vive*, 8 avril 1981; Gustave Dubois, "Dans le champ du possible," *L'Eau Vive*, 20 mai 1981.

ACEFC, the *Education Act* allowed the minister to establish a board wherever it was in the best educational interests of citizens; since it would be in the best interests of the Fransaskois, McArthur ought to do it.¹⁶⁵

But McArthur and the Department of Education continued to hesitate. With a 1982 election on the horizon, the NDP was worried about losing political support. Creating a French school board would undoubtedly cause problems. Western alienation was at a high. Western Canadians were getting fed up with constitutional wrangling and hearing about Quebec; they were even more enraged about the National Energy Program, introduced by Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government in October 1980. For western Canadians upset with Ottawa, 1980 to 1981 was known as the "winter of discontent".¹⁶⁶ The NDP worried constantly about how far it should go in supporting French, since it could easily be equated with supporting Trudeau and the federal government. Indeed, the political costs of French school boards were the foremost concern for the Department of Education: "With the prospect of a 1982 election, it would be advisable to delay any serious consideration until after the election, thus avoiding this as a campaign issue."¹⁶⁷ The department recommended that McArthur not make any promises.¹⁶⁸ During a subsequent August 26 meeting with the ACFC and ACEFC, McArthur explained that any type of Fransaskois school governance could not be granted without significant amendments to the *Education Act*.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Suzanne Charland, "On demande officiellement une commission scolaire fransaskoise au ministre de l'Éducation Doug McArthur," *L'Eau Vive*, 3 juin 1981; "Les parents de Vonda appuient l'idée d'une Commission Scolaire Fransaskoise," *L'Eau Vive*, 24 juin 1981.

¹⁶⁶ See Larry Pratt and Garth Stevenson, *Western Separatism: The Myths, Realities & Dangers* (Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1981), 9; Roger Gibbins, "Political Discontent in the Prairie West," in R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer, *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, 2nd ed. (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1992), 685-696.

¹⁶⁷ R.E. Clayton to Doug McArthur, 20 August 1981. [PAS], Douglas McArthur Fonds.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ "Les Fransaskois rencontrent le Ministre de l'Éducation," *L'Eau Vive*, 2 septembre 1981.

As with the Vonda dispute, Fransaskois pressure on the government revealed the deficiencies of Saskatchewan's legislation and vision for French-language education. Senior civil servants were unsure as to whether federal government funding should be used for Fransaskois education or for expanding French immersion programs. Should all programs be available to all, or should restrictions be placed on admissions based on mother tongue?¹⁷⁰ Or should a portion of federal grant money for French-language education be funnelled into supporting and studying the idea of a Francophone school board?¹⁷¹

Further pressure on McArthur by the ACFC and ACEFC was unsuccessful. The government was as eager to reject Fransaskois school governance as the community was to achieve it. Irène Chabot argued that control over Fransaskois schools was "la clef de l'épanouissement des Fransaskois" and a question of fundamental justice.¹⁷²

In a December 1981 meeting, McArthur rejected a number of ACFC proposals for a francophone-run school in Prince Albert.¹⁷³ As Allan Blakeney wrote to Raoul Granger, a Fransaskois parent who later played an instrumental role in the fight for school governance: "While I appreciate the desire for education reflecting Fransaskois culture, I do not believe it would be wise to further fragment the Saskatchewan school system."¹⁷⁴ Irène Chabot, responding to the government's decision on behalf of the Fransaskois community, indicated to McArthur how frustrated they were with the government:

Il est bien clair que vous mécomprenez complètement la situation de la minorité fransaskoise lorsque vous qualifiez ses difficultés essentiellement sans importance, comparable à d'autres difficultés résolues quotidiennement dans le système scolaire...Quand une minorité, que l'on dit officielle au pays, ne peut pas

¹⁷⁰ Peter Dyck to Lou Julé, 2 October 1981. [PAS], Doug McArthur Fonds.

¹⁷¹ Doug McArthur to Irène Chabot, 5 October 1981. [PAS], Doug McArthur Fonds.

¹⁷² France Bélanger, "Le contrôle et la gestion scolaire: la clé de l'épanouissement des Fransaskois," *L'Eau Vive*, 20 janvier 1982.

¹⁷³ France Bélanger, "Doug McArthur rejette en bloc les propositions de l'A.C.F.C.," *L'Eau Vive* 23 décembre 1981.

¹⁷⁴ Allan Blakeney to Raoul Granger, 11 January 1982. [PAS], Doug McArthur Fonds.

contrôler ses propres écoles, dites-nous, Monsieur le Ministre, en quoi cela est différent d'un système totalitaire où seul les autorités ont droit de décision sur la façon de vivre du menu peuple.¹⁷⁵

But the provincial government did not completely misunderstand the Fransaskois community. Rather, Premier Blakeney and the NDP were worried about holding onto power as the political right gained momentum across western Canada and the country. In the 1980 federal election, only two seats in western Canada went to Trudeau's Liberal party; any provincial government seen to be too close to his policies was bound to suffer the consequences at the polls.¹⁷⁶ Westerners were angry, and change was in the air. As the 1982 Saskatchewan election campaign heated up in March, the Western Canada Concept Party stormed onto the scene and made a number of headlines for its attacks on French-language education. Western Canada Concept stood for, among other things, "One Nation" and "One Official Language."¹⁷⁷ Ray Bailey, the Saskatchewan leader of Western Canada Concept, lambasted Blakeney and the NDP for going too far on French education. Bailey argued that francophone schools were wrong because "if you do it for them, you have to do it for the Ukrainians, the Polacks, the Germans and so on. I don't think any province could afford it. This is an English-speaking country."¹⁷⁸ Bailey promised to eliminate funding for French-language education and took his crusade against Blakeney, Trudeau, and bilingualism across the province, drawing large crowds even in traditionally strong NDP ridings.¹⁷⁹

Change was indeed in the air. Although the Western Canadian Concept Party did not win a seat in Saskatchewan, the province voted overwhelmingly for a new government. On 26 April

¹⁷⁵ Irène Chabot to Doug McArthur, 22 février 1982. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁷⁶ Allan Tupper, "Mr. Trudeau and the West," in Larry Pratt and Garth Stevenson, *Western Separatism: The Myths, Realities & Dangers* (Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1981), 85-104.

¹⁷⁷ "Awake! Western Canada Concept." *University of Calgary Archives*, Dr. F.C. Marshall Fonds.

¹⁷⁸ "Separatists would end French school grants," *Leader Post*, 31 March 1982.

¹⁷⁹ France Bélanger, "Ray Bailey du WCC s'oppose aux écoles françaises mais refuse de se reconnaître raciste," *L'Eau Vive*, 7 avril 1982; Richard Cleroux, "Separatist leader is well received in Saskatchewan NDP stronghold," *Globe and Mail*, 1 April 1982.

1982, Allan Blakeney and the NDP lost to the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, led by an upstart agronomist Grant Devine. In a way, the Fransaskois predicted Blakeney's loss, believing that his middle road approach to bilingualism pleased no one. A month before the election the ACEFC discussed provincial government education policy at its congress in March:

Le gouvernement aimerait avoir des solutions uniformes. Le gouvernement provincial, dans les coins anglophones, fait campagne dans le sens que 'vous voyez comment on tient tête aux demandes des francophones', alors que dans les coins francophones, le gouvernement fait campagne dans le sens que 'voyez comme c'est facile d'obtenir des services en français'. Alors dans un sens le gouvernement alimente lui-même le ressac des anglophones.¹⁸⁰

The Fransaskois community believed that it had made few fundamental gains in francophone education during the Blakeney years. Perhaps with a new government in power, the Fransaskois could make more progress on the school governance question.

Another Government's Promise: The Governance Question in the Early Devine Years (1982 to 1984)

Two weeks before Devine won the election, the ACFC published its strategic plan for the 1982-1984 period in the Fransaskois community newspaper, *l'Eau Vive*. Its primary objective was to build a Fransaskois education system and obtain amendments to the *Education Act* to allow for Fransaskois governance.¹⁸¹ Despite the challenges and defeats of the previous decade, there was a spirit of optimism in the Fransaskois community. A new governing party presented opportunities for improved community-government relations. In May 1982 both Liguori LeBlanc and Irène Chabot wrote to Devine, requesting meetings on the schools question and official bilingualism in Saskatchewan more generally.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ ACEFC, "Compte rendu du congrès de l'A.C.E.F.C.," 6 mars 1982. Wilfrid Denis Papers.

¹⁸¹ "Planification 1982-84 de l'ACFC," *l'Eau Vive*, 14 avril 1982.

¹⁸² Liguori Leblanc to Grant Devine, 13 mai 1982. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds; Irène Chabot to Grant Devine, 5 May 1982. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

Just over a week before the official patriation day for the new Constitution, Grant Devine and the Conservative caucus met with Irène Chabot and several Fransaskois leaders in Regina. The civil service, as well as new Minister of Education Gordon Currie, warned Devine that on the French education portfolio "...a strong and continuing lobby can be expected" from the ACFC.¹⁸³ *L'Eau Vive*, somewhat exaggerating the importance of the meeting, called it "Une première dans l'histoire politique de la Saskatchewan."¹⁸⁴ While the tone was informal Chabot used the opportunity to recall the importance of history to the Fransaskois community, and that this history confirmed the ACFC vision for a bilingual Saskatchewan:

The pride we have in being French-Canadian, in being Fransaskois, is not a remnant of Folklore: we have inherited it from our parents and our leaders who never ceased to believe that to be French-Canadian meant that your ancestors had been partners in building the nation as we know it today and that the constitution of 1867 had simply confirmed in law the existing reality, that you could choose to be an English speaking Canadian or a French speaking Canadian anywhere within the boundaries of the new Nation. Our fore-fathers were very aware that they were moving within their country when they came to the North West Territories and therefore always believed, as we do, in the right to be equal partners in the North West Territories and later on in the province of Saskatchewan.¹⁸⁵

As they had during the 1970s, the Fransaskois used memory and history as one of their main political tools. For Chabot, the history of francophones in western Canada and the equal French-English partnership meant that "the legal status of French in Saskatchewan [must] be recognized by the government."¹⁸⁶ Devine was non-committal. He promised no more than a study on the financial elements of official bilingualism at the provincial level. Ever the populist, he added, as he would several more times during his premiership, that he considered himself close to the

¹⁸³ Gordon Currie to Grant Devine, 25 May 1982. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

¹⁸⁴ France Bélanger, "Rencontre avec le gouvernement Devine à Regina," *L'Eau Vive*, 30 juin 1982. The newspaper claimed that it was the first time that a provincial premier met with the ACFC, but Blakeney had attended meetings during his premiership in the 1970s.

¹⁸⁵ Irène Chabot, "Allocution de la présidente de l'A.C.F.C. Madame Irène Chabot," 24 juin 1982. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Fransaskois people since his wife Chantal was a French Canadian and their children studied in French at school.¹⁸⁷

Meanwhile, the Fransaskois kept pushing the government and school boards to expand French-language education. Now with section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guaranteeing minority language education, francophone communities across the country advanced their cause.¹⁸⁸ The Secretary of State offered help to the Saskatchewan government in the event that "the establishment of separate French-language school boards would most likely entail additional expenditures on the part of your government."¹⁸⁹

The times called for optimism. In Saskatchewan, the Department of Education approved the opening of l'École canadienne-française (ECF) in Saskatoon in August 1982.¹⁹⁰ ECF was the result of almost a year's worth of negotiations between the community and the Saskatoon Separate School board, and it inspired parents across the province to seek similar legal agreements for French-language schools.¹⁹¹ The arrangement, however, was still far from what the Fransaskois wanted -- a province-wide board which would provide French-language education for the Fransaskois.¹⁹² The community remembered the bitter battles and defeats of the Blakeney years and was not about to give up the goal of full control over its own schools.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ France Bélanger, "Rencontre avec le gouvernement Devine à Regina," *L'Eau Vive*, 30 juin 1982.

¹⁸⁸ See Behiels, *Canada's Francophone Minority Communities*; FFHQ, "La Constitution et les droits scolaires des Francophones hors Québec," 1982. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

¹⁸⁹ Serge Joyal to Gordon Currie, 7 July 1983, in "Exhibit Book: Le Conseil de l'École canadienne-française de Saskatoon, Inc.," *CEF v. Saskatchewan*, [1985] SKQB 5495, exhibit 5.

¹⁹⁰ "Francophones consider establishing new school," *Star Phoenix*, 6 August 1982; "Special school to be set up for French-speaking children," *Star Phoenix*, 19 August 1982; France Bélanger, "L'École canadienne-française sera en opération," *L'Eau Vive*, 25 août 1982.

¹⁹¹ Pierre Brault, "On rétrograde en demandant moins que Saskatoon," 24 novembre 1982.

¹⁹² Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 93.

¹⁹³ As early as November 1981 the community requested a francophone school in Saskatoon, noting to then Minister Doug McArthur that "nous choisissons de gérer cette école nous-mêmes." Diane Ansell to Doug McArthur, 6 novembre 1981. "Exhibit Book, Le Conseil de l'École canadienne-française de Saskatoon, Inc.," *CEF v. Saskatchewan*, [1985] SKQB 5495, "Exhibit Book, Le Conseil de l'École canadienne-française de Saskatoon, Inc.," exhibit 2. McArthur replied that "I cannot agree that an alternative to the current administrative structure is required...the responsibility...rests with boards of education." Doug McArthur to Diane Ansell, 18 January 1982.

Indeed, relations between the ECF and Saskatoon Catholic Board of Education were not always easy. On one occasion in 1983, for example, the ECF school council recruited a francophone teacher for its staff, only to have the board place her in a different school.¹⁹⁴ These sorts of minor quibbles only reinforced the belief in the community that full administrative control over French education was the only way.¹⁹⁵

One of the most important results of the constant problems between the Fransaskois, school boards, and the provincial government during the 1970s was the increasing professionalization of the Fransaskois school governance movement. Over the course of 1982-1983 years, both the ACFC and the ACEFC went to great lengths to clarify the mandates of their respective associations, and ensure that the government could not undermine the Fransaskois community's position on school governance by giving mixed messages and communicating different ideas to different people.¹⁹⁶ In February, 1983 the ACEFC undertook a major revision of its mandate and vision for francophone school governance. It became la Commission des écoles fransaskoises (CEF), the term "commission" chosen over "conseil" because members believed it was more authoritative and indicated a stronger organization: "Le nom crée une perception psychologique à l'échelle provinciale, et au niveau des groupes avec lesquels ont transigé."¹⁹⁷ The main goal of the CEF was to achieve Fransaskois school governance. At a joint

CEF v. Saskatchewan, "Exhibit Book, Le Conseil de l'École canadienne-française de Saskatoon, Inc." [1985] SKQB 5495, exhibit 2.

¹⁹⁴ Cecil Duperreault to Ken McDonough, 18 May 1983. Wilfrid Denis papers.

¹⁹⁵ Another issue that immediately followed the opening of l'École canadienne-française was transportation. The government and school board did not offer to pay to have students bussed to the school, which again forced parents to put pressure on the education minister Gordon Currie to rectify the situation. Wilfrid Denis to Gordon Currie, 17 September 1982. Wilfrid Denis Papers.

¹⁹⁶ "Rencontre entre l'ACFC et l'ACEFC pour réexaminer leurs champs d'action respectifs," *L'Eau Vive*, 1 décembre 1982; "Compte-rendu de la rencontre de l'Association des Commissaires d'École franco-canadiens de la Saskatchewan avec René Archambault," 5 décembre 1982, Wilfrid Denis papers; "Une partie du dossier du Conseil scolaire fransaskois pourrait être remis à la CEF," *L'Eau Vive*, 28 septembre 1983; "Le conseil d'administration de l'ACFC précise le mandat de la CEF," *L'Eau Vive*, 26 octobre 1983.

¹⁹⁷ "L'ACEFC devient la CEF," *L'Eau Vive*, 16 février 1983.

meeting between the CEF and the ACFC, the two organizations explained why Fransaskois control was necessary:

On n'est pas capable de contrôler l'embauche d'un professeur. On n'a rien à dire sur l'orientation, la direction que le professeur peut prendre. On n'a rien à dire sur la programmation. On ne peut pas contrôler qui vient à notre école. Il faut développer une stratégie politique de revendication...Il faut fournir de l'information. Il faut être en mesure de démontrer le vouloir de la population.¹⁹⁸

Here it is important to recall the fundamental distinction that the Fransaskois made in terms of francophone and immersion education. Immersion was certainly popular, with the Official Languages Commissioner noting in 1984 that it was taking the country by storm.¹⁹⁹ Francophone education was linguistic *and* cultural; immersion only offered language, and not even at a level that the Fransaskois considered appropriate for francophone students.²⁰⁰ The Association canadienne d'éducation en langue française (ACELF), a national organization dedicated to bringing francophone schools and governance to fruition across the country, summed up the importance of these schools:

The expression 'French school' usually designates an institution which provides instruction in French to pupils whose first language is French. However, this meaning does not apply to all institutions labelled as such...Provincial definitions of French schools vary considerably...The French school is an institution which makes a considerable contribution to the maintenance and development of the French fact in Canada. It is associated with the family, the Church, associations, and other cultural, social, and community institutions of the French-speaking group.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ ACFC, "Compte-rendu de la réunion du comité conjointe du comité exécutif de la C.E.F. avec le Bureau de direction de l'A.C.F.C., 16 septembre 1983. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

¹⁹⁹ See for example H.H. (David) Stern, "The Immersion Phenomenon," *Language and Society* 12 (Winter 1984), 4-7. In 1986, the Saskatchewan government predicted that by 1990 the province would have over 18,000 students in various levels of French immersion. "18,000 écoliers en classe d'immersion," *L'Eau Vive*, 17 septembre 1986.

²⁰⁰ According to one *Eau Vive* editorial, immersion schools were "un phénomène dont les Fransaskois et les francophones en général doivent se méfier" and were being used by anglophone organizations such as Canadian Parents for French to advocate against creating francophone schools. Anne Robitaille, "Le danger des écoles d'immersion," *L'Eau Vive*, 14 décembre 1983.

²⁰¹ ACEFC, "L'école française," décembre 1983. The document was sent to Premier Devine by the CEF in order to further clear up any ambiguities remaining over why French schools were so important to the community. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

On governance, the ACELF was unequivocal:

How can such a deep-seated determination to be Francophone, so strongly expressed by parents, teachers, and members of the community, be displayed if they do not have charge of the school administration? Can we believe that the administration of a French school and a school project centered around the conveyance of the French culture can be entrusted to people of another language and culture? This situation has prevailed in many areas for too long a time to allow it to continue. A school board, composed of members of the Francophone community, will ensure that teachers, courses, and programs meet the cultural requirements of the community in which the French school is established.²⁰²

The CEF, for its part, along with Canadian Parents for French and the ACFC, published a small pamphlet intended for anglophone parents interested in French immersion in order to explain the differences between francophone and immersion education. "CPF, ACFC and CEF hope that this publication will be useful in promoting mutual understanding between our two linguistic communities"²⁰³, the document noted. It compared the two systems and showed why Fransaskois education differed from immersion, emphasizing "the need for French Language students to have a school milieu in which their cultural and linguistic identity is reinforced."²⁰⁴

The national push for control over francophone schools, already underway in Saskatchewan and other provinces such as Alberta, Ontario, and Manitoba,²⁰⁵ acted as a source of political renewal for the Fransaskois community. *L'Eau Vive* called on all Fransaskois to participate in the activities of the ACEFC, "given that the Devine government seems willing to move forward in the domain of francophone education."²⁰⁶ The newspaper also called on the

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Canadian Parents for French - Saskatchewan, ACFC, and CEF, "French Language Education in Saskatchewan: French School/Immersion School," no date. Wilfrid Denis, Papers.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ See Michael Behiels, *Canada's Francophone Minority Communities: Constitutional Renewal and the Winning of School Governance* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004).

²⁰⁶ Pierre Brault, "L'ACEFC et l'Éducation," *L'Eau Vive*, 25 janvier 1983.

CEF to present plans for a Fransaskois school system to the provincial government in order to move the school cause forward.²⁰⁷

The CEF and Fransaskois parents immediately set to work on a major governance proposal to submit to the province. The CEF began by meeting with school principals and parent groups in Fransaskois communities across the province. Principals outlined difficulties in dealing with anglophone boards on staffing and resources, while parents wanted better communication between different Fransaskois communities.²⁰⁸ The meeting also defined Fransaskois education: "Elle est un processus qui permet aux Fransaskois de croître et de développer leurs talents et leurs habilités en demeurant eux-mêmes."²⁰⁹ The meeting minutes noted that "Tout le monde s'entendait pour accorder la priorité aux aspects suivants: contrôle (administration), financement, édifice, transport...."²¹⁰

But without a model for what a Fransaskois board would look like, the government could simply delay even discussing its implementation -- which was the main strategy used by Premier Devine and the Department of Education in 1983. Minister of Education Gordon Currie, in a letter to CEF President Raoul Granger, wrote that the government would not move ahead with anything until the community presented a detailed proposal.²¹¹ Granger answered that he knew a proposal was necessary, but difficult given that the CEF had limited resources. He added: "Nous remarquons de la part de votre ministère une absence totale d'intérêt vis-à-vis ce projet...On préfère, semble-t-il, dépenser ses énergies à maintenir le statu quo."²¹²

²⁰⁷ Pierre Brault, "À quand notre tour?," *L'Eau Vive*, 5 avril 1983.

²⁰⁸ CEF, "Compte-rendu de la réunion des Directeurs d'écoles et des présidents des conseils de parents tenue à Saskatoon," 28 mai 1983. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Raoul Granger à Gordon Currie, 30 juin 1983. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

²¹² *Ibid.*

Aside from government or public acceptance of a Fransaskois board, there were also practical questions. What, for example, would the tax base be for a Fransaskois board? The CEF released a study in August 1983 suggesting that francophones pay their taxes to the new board, regardless of their residence in the province; this arrangement, if supplemented by money from the provincial government, would allow for proper financing of the board.²¹³ A month after the CEF study, the ACFC published a document outlining the community's needs and priorities in Fransaskois education. "Partout les francophones désirent qu'on distingue entre classes françaises et classes d'immersion en langue française," the document noted.²¹⁴ This distinction was crucial to proper administration of francophone education, and logically supposed the creation of a francophone board.²¹⁵ Even if the government agreed, the document continued, a francophone board faced major challenges in terms of logistics (transportation, administration, etc.) across a large province. Finances would have to be negotiated with the province, and an organizational structure would have to be worked out within the government in order to accommodate the new board.²¹⁶

First Steps? Towards a Model of Fransaskois School Governance (1984-1985)

The main barrier to expanding francophone education during the Devine years, as it had been under the Thatcher and Blakeney governments, was the reality of politics. There were limits to what the public would accept, and throughout Saskatchewan history the Fransaskois learned that political activism had its limits. If the community hoped to make significant progress in education with Grant Devine's government, it soon became clear that they were in for a difficult

²¹³ CEF, "Conseil scolaire fransaskois: base de taxation," août 1983. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

²¹⁴ ACFC, "Priorités es besoins en éducation, province de la Saskatchewan," septembre 1983. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

time. By 1984 relations between the Fransaskois community and the government began to break down as the battle over control of French-language school governance became more and more heated. On 9 February 1984, after almost a year of meetings, research, and planning, the CEF submitted its major proposal for a francophone school board to the provincial government.²¹⁷ As a political and policy document, it confirmed the major role that memory played in driving the Fransaskois vision of French in society. The first part of the proposal documented the French historical presence in western Canada, including the use of French in the North-West Territories' early education system.²¹⁸ It was a story of the government's betrayal of dualism in the West:

À leur arrivée dans l'Ouest, les francophones ont établi des écoles françaises et qui répondaient à leurs besoins. Les législateurs n'ont pas tardé à leur imposer l'anglais afin de pouvoir les assimiler le plus vite possible. Malgré ces efforts, il reste encore des francophones en Saskatchewan et nous croyons qu'il est temps de corriger les injustices qui sévissent depuis 90 ans et de leur redonner le contrôle de leurs écoles, ainsi que les moyens nécessaires à l'exercice efficace de ce contrôle.²¹⁹

The francophones, the brief continued, "se reconnaissent toujours comme les premiers qui, suite au peuplement du pays par les autochtones, sont arrivés à ce pays et qui y sont restés...Ils se considèrent donc comme peuple partenaire à part entière avec tout ce que cela comporte de respect par rapport à leur individualité et leur collectivité."²²⁰ Furthermore, the brief argued, the *Education Act* was inconsistent with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* insofar as it did not allow for Fransaskois control over francophone schools.²²¹

The provincial government promised to study the proposal in detail, while the Fransaskois and federal government kept up the political pressure. Publicly, Saskatchewan went

²¹⁷ Nicole Blackburn, "La C.E.F. dépose son mémoire," *L'Eau Vive*, 15 février 1984.

²¹⁸ "Projet Commission scolaire fransaskoise. Mémoire pour présentation au Ministre de l'Éducation de la Saskatchewan," CEF, 9 février 1984. Wilfrid Denis, Papers. The entire "Mémoire" was also reprinted over the course of several weeks in *L'Eau Vive*. "Projet de commission scolaire fransaskoise," *L'Eau Vive*, 14 mars 1984.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

into damage-control mode. In April, Official Languages Commissioner Maxwell Yalden accused Saskatchewan of doing little to help francophones within its own provincial borders.²²² Education Minister Patricia Smith wrote to Raoul Granger that "I am quite concerned that Mr. Yalden appears to be unaware of the many positive things that we have been able to do in the province of Saskatchewan for the francophone community."²²³ Devine's reply to Yalden was that Saskatchewan was being generous given the demographic size of the Fransaskois community. These exchanges prompted a public denunciation of Devine by new ACFC president Liguori LeBlanc. LeBlanc, already known in the Fransaskois community for his efforts in expanding French-language education in the province, reminded Devine that the few French schools and non-existent French services available in Saskatchewan meant there was plenty of room for improvement.²²⁴

Although they first tried negotiations and pressure, the Fransaskois certainly did not rule out the possibility of taking the government to court. The community, for example, closely followed other francophone cases winding their way through the courts in Alberta and Ontario. When the Ontario Supreme Court ruled in June 1984 that section 23 of the *Charter* also included the right to francophone control over schools, the ACFC expressed its hope that

ce jugement facilitera une réponse positive de la ministre de l'éducation, l'honorable Pat Smith, dans ce dossier. Sinon, les éléments qui semblent être contenus dans ce jugement...permettront aux Fransaskois d'étoffer davantage les arguments nécessaires à l'atteinte de leur objectif de contrôle de leurs écoles.²²⁵

In September and October, with still no word from the government on the CEF proposal, the Fransaskois community denounced Devine and Smith for procrastinating on the schools

²²² "Le récent rapport de Max Yalden renforce la demande de la CEF," 18 avril 1984.

²²³ Pat Smith to Raoul Granger, 27 April 1984. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

²²⁴ "L'ACFC refute les allégations du Premier Ministre Grant DEVINE," *L'Eau Vive*, le 6 avril 1984, 1.

²²⁵ ACFC, "Communiqué," 28 juin 1984. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

portfolio.²²⁶ Granger also wanted changes to the *Education Act* which would make a clear distinction between francophone and immersion schools, in addition to recognizing French as equal to English in the education system.²²⁷ In January 1985, the ACFC wrote Devine that further delays on the Fransaskois education proposals were unacceptable, especially since "La communauté fransaskoise fait face à une étape décisive dans son évolution historique."²²⁸ In particular, LeBlanc charged, Patricia Smith "refuse de se compromettre par rapport au principe même de donner aux Fransaskois le pouvoir de gérance et d'administration sur leurs écoles...En ceci, elle semble refléter la position officielle du gouvernement."²²⁹

The government did not have an official position, except that it believed the status quo was constitutionally sound. Its main strategy was to delay the Fransaskois community as long as possible on the question, especially with an election coming up in the near future. Smith and Devine did not even discuss the CEF proposal with Cabinet until January 1985. Smith asked cabinet to approve her strategy of rejecting the CEF model, but proposing a number of pilot projects wherein Fransaskois parents would negotiate greater educational decision powers with chosen school boards.²³⁰ This strategy, Smith told cabinet, would show a "commitment to move toward providing more local autonomy of French minority education. It may enable this gradual evolution of responsibility within existing administrative structures, avoiding court litigation, the potential for public unrest and substantial increased costs."²³¹ In reality, the plan differed little from the strategy used by the Blakeney government during the 1970s: refuse to enact any fundamental changes to education, ensure that government control over legislation was

²²⁶ Pierre Brault, "Selon M. Raoul Granger, 'Il n'y a plus d'excuses'," *L'Eau Vive*, 26 septembre 1984; Brault, "M. Liguori LeBlanc dénonce le manque d'intérêt du gouvernement provincial pour la reconnaissance du français dans la province," *L'Eau Vive*, 10 octobre 1984.

²²⁷ "Les francophones proposent des amendements à la Loi scolaire de la province," *L'Eau Vive*, 7 novembre 1984.

²²⁸ Liguori LeBlanc to Grant Devine, 24 janvier 1985. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Pat Smith to Premier Devine and all Cabinet Ministers, 26 January 1985. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

protected, and reinforce local board autonomy. Given the difficulties the Fransaskois encountered with various school boards in the 1970s, especially in Vonda, Smith's "new" strategy to have the community negotiate devolved powers with boards was not met with much enthusiasm.

If Smith, Devine, and the government were unwilling to court controversy, the CEF had opposite plans. At its February 1985 congress the organization adopted "une double stratégie pour atteindre son but ultime, soit la voie du lobbying politique et la voie juridique."²³² *L'Eau Vive* predicted that given the way things were going, the community would end up suing the government.²³³ On 26 February Smith informed the CEF that it would not accept granting school governance to the francophone community.²³⁴ Two months later, Premier Devine communicated to ACFC President Liguori LeBlanc the same message:

Comme vous le comprenez bien, l'impact que votre proposition aurait sur le système éducatif nous imposait d'évaluer soigneusement ses implications éventuelles. En plus d'une évaluation de votre proposition les ministères de l'Éducation et de la Justice, le Cabinet a étudié cette proposition, ainsi que les autres options, à deux occasions. Suite à notre discussion la plus récente, l'Honorable Patricia Smith a indiqué le 26 février dernier au Président de la C.E.F., Monsieur Raoul Granger, et au Comité consultatif sur le minorité de langue officielle auprès de la ministre, que l'administration actuelle n'était pas prête à envisager la proposition de la C.E.F. ni aucune des options proposées qui entraîneraient des transformations à la structure administrative scolaire en place [sic].²³⁵

The CEF had its answer. Any fundamental changes to school governance in favour of francophone control would not be implemented by the Devine government.

Saskatchewan's French-Language Education Before the Courts (1985-1988)

²³² Pierre Brault, "Jusqu'à la Cour suprême s'il le faut!" *L'Eau Vive*, 20 février 1985.

²³³ Pierre Brault, "Nous nous retrouverons en Cour," *L'Eau Vive*, 9 janvier 1985.

²³⁴ "Commission des Écoles fransaskoises," *L'Eau Vive*, 29 mai 1985.

²³⁵ Grant Devine to Liguori LeBlanc, 12 avril 1985. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

Fed up with political impasse, the Fransaskois decided to take the school governance cause to the courts. They were inspired by the Franco-Albertan community, who in July 1985 won a partial victory before the Court of Alberta Queen's Bench. In *Mahé v. Alberta*, the Court ruled that section 23 of the *Charter* included governance rights for Franco-Albertans. More specifically, the court wrote that the government could satisfy its obligations for francophone governance by simply allowing francophone parents on existing school boards.²³⁶

Going to court was risky, but when political negotiations and lobbying yielded little there were no other options for the community. In any case, the Fransaskois had nothing to lose. They knew that the *Charter* offered them the right to francophone education and it was now a matter of deciding the extent of that right. By August 1985, the provincial government also recognized that political negotiations and discussions with the Fransaskois were going nowhere, and perhaps only the courts could resolve the continual debate between the two sides.²³⁷ In mid-August, the CEF met with ACFC executives and francophone parent committee members from across the province to discuss the community's legal options. Gustave Dubois, one of the major leaders in the early Fransaskois schools movement, went over developments in other provinces, noting that in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario there were possibilities of winning.²³⁸ The CEF left little question as to its resolve to see the case through. In November 1985 it noted in *L'Eau Vive* that "Il faut s'attendre à ce que cette démarche aboutisse en Cour suprême du Canada."²³⁹

The CEF chose as its legal counsel Fransaskois lawyer Roger Lepage, who was also busy representing Father André Mercure before the Supreme Court in his ongoing case to have French recognized as an official language in Saskatchewan. Lepage believed that the key to the

²³⁶ *Mahé v. Alberta*, [1985] ABQB 143; "Les tribunaux donnent raison aux Franco-Albertains," *L'Eau Vive* 7 août 1985.

²³⁷ Pierre Brault, "L'A.C.F.C. invitée par le gouvernement à défendre son point," *L'Eau Vive*, 28 août 1985.

²³⁸ CEF, "Réunion du comité exécutif et de Me Lepage avec les codemandeurs," 17 août 1985. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

²³⁹ CEF, "Reconnaissance de nos droits: rien de moins," bulletin in *L'Eau Vive*, novembre 1985.

Fransaskois' argument was the distinction between immersion and francophone education, with the major goal of having the *Education Act* struck down by the courts in favour of Fransaskois governance.²⁴⁰ To do so, Lepage explained, the community would have to maintain its position that anything less than complete control over French-language schools was unacceptable to the community, and a violation of the *Charter*.²⁴¹

The CEF filed its statement of claim in the Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench on 10 October 1985. According to the CEF, section 180 of the *Education Act*, which gave discretion to school boards and the Minister of Education as to when and where French-language education could be offered, was inconsistent with section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.²⁴² More importantly, the CEF affirmed,

The Education Act does not provide citizens of the French linguistic minority in the province of Saskatchewan the right to manage and control their French minority language instruction of French minority language educational facilities.²⁴³

The ACFC and Fransaskois community leaders saw the CEF legal challenge as a chance to right legal and historical wrongs, but also to unite the community. Wilfrid Denis, a Fransaskois sociology professor, reminded delegates at the 1985 ACFC convention in November that Saskatchewan's francophones always had to fight for their rights, and that without their political struggles francophone culture would not continue to exist in Saskatchewan.²⁴⁴ Both the ACFC and the CEF played a key role in fostering and articulating a rights-based community discourse surrounding the French language. The CEF, for example, published a series of "Rappel

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² "Statement of Claim," *CEF v. Saskatchewan*, 10 October 1985, 9. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁴⁴ Yves Lusignan, "Wilfrid Denis invite les Fransaskois à se tenir debout," *L'Eau Vive*, 20 novembre 1985.

des droits linguistiques" in *L'Eau Vive* which insisted that governance was part of the *Charter* section 23 rights, even if it was not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution.²⁴⁵

The trial was delayed until 19 May 1987 and lasted ten days. The CEF, as it had before, used the case as an opportunity to "mieux informer la population sur différents aspects de l'éducation francophone en milieu minoritaire" through a series of conferences in francophone communities across the province.²⁴⁶ The trial was difficult. It revealed the major differences in how the Fransaskois community and the provincial government viewed the education question. Fransaskois lawyer Roger Lepage began the CEF case by presenting a history of education in the province.²⁴⁷ Lepage noted that the community had asked for community-controlled school boards even before 1982, and that the pre-*Charter* legislation remained essentially intact.²⁴⁸ In a similar vein, Wilfrid Denis, who acted as an expert witness for the CEF, presented historical and sociological data on linguistic assimilation of the provincial francophone community. The government, for its part, argued that while some wrongs may have been committed in the past, history could not be re-written. Assimilation was also a matter of individual choice rather than something the government was responsible for bringing about.²⁴⁹ The province defended its legislation, explaining that it provided for francophone education as required by the *Charter*. Governance, the province explained, was not necessary to fulfil Saskatchewan's obligations towards the francophone community.

Winning Governance? The Wimmer Decision and its aftermath, 1988-1991

²⁴⁵ "Rappel des droits linguistiques (1)," *L'Eau Vive*, 6 mai 1987.

²⁴⁶ "CEF et le procès scolaire: Deux séries de conférences dans la province pour préciser les enjeux," 20 mai 1987.

²⁴⁷ "Moment historique pour le CEF," *L'Eau Vive*, 20 mai 1987.

²⁴⁸ "Exhibit Book, Wilfrid B. Denis," *CEF v. Saskatchewan*, [1985] SKQB 5495.

²⁴⁹ "La province tient à circonscrire la culture et la communauté fransaskoises," *L'Eau Vive*, 27 mai 1987.

On 18 February 1988 -- a week before the Supreme Court handed down its ruling in the *Mercure* case -- the Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench delivered its ruling on the province's *Education Act*. Judge Wimmer based much of his decision on the 1985 Alberta Court of Queen's Bench judgment and, like that one, left the question of school governance in an ambivalent state. Wimmer upheld school board powers and the overall administrative structure of the provincial education system, but explained that the *Education Act* could be unconstitutional if board powers were used to deny French language education to the Fransaskois. According to Wimmer, the demographic weight of different Fransaskois communities was a key factor in deciding whether or not section 23 rights existed. The province's education legislation, he ruled, was unconstitutional when it did not allow governance in areas where there were enough Fransaskois students to warrant it. It was also unconstitutional wherever school division boundaries might impede implementation of s. 23 rights, and insofar as it required ministerial permission to establish a French language school.²⁵⁰

As with the *Mercure* decision²⁵¹, the problem with Wimmer's ruling was its ambivalence. It allowed both the Fransaskois community and the government to claim victory. Further, by declaring that it was up to the Legislature rather than the courts to settle the francophone governance question, Wimmer left an important right in the hands of the English-speaking majority. His ruling certainly did not change the government's mind on the question. The Saskatchewan Department of Justice called it "not particularly persuasive" and maintained its position that section 23 rights did not include school governance.²⁵² The Fransaskois, however,

²⁵⁰ "Exhibit Book, Wilfrid B. Denis," *CEF v. Saskatchewan*, [1985] SKQB 5495, 31.

²⁵¹ See chapter five of this dissertation.

²⁵² Robert G. Richards to Laurie McFarlane, 18 February 1988. [PAS], Bob Andrew Fonds.

called Wimmer's decision a victory and promised to press the government for further action.²⁵³ On February 25, ACFC President Rupert Baudais wrote to Grant Devine that "Nous nous attendons à ce que votre gouvernement se penche dans les plus brefs délais sur la mise en application du jugement."²⁵⁴

Although Education Minister Lorne Hepworth promised to give a more elaborate government reaction to the Wimmer decision in February, cabinet did not meet to discuss the ruling until 10 March and considered returning to negotiations with the Fransaskois.²⁵⁵ Cabinet wanted to work out something comprehensive with the Fransaskois on both the schools and the *Mercure* questions in order to avoid political controversy. *Mercure* in particular could serve as a bargaining chip for discussions on education governance:

The government could link Mercure to education. Education could initiate discussions with Francophone groups on the issue of "management and control" of French language education...Francophone leaders are at this stage taking a relatively hard public stand, and may not readily accept a genuine compromise. However, they wish to enter negotiations and discuss the issues with government...Offering "management and control" as part of the response to Mercure might make the overall package more attractive to Francophone groups.²⁵⁶

On March 15, however, cabinet changed its mind. Rather than negotiate, the government would take its chance with the courts.²⁵⁷ It decided to appeal the decision, arguing that section 23 of the *Charter* did not include the right to governance; even if it did, Saskatchewan's limits were reasonably justified.²⁵⁸ The CEF also appealed Judge Wimmer's decision, arguing that he had erred in not interpreting section 23 of the *Charter* broadly enough, in implying that minority

²⁵³ "Jugement de la Cour du Banc de la Reine: les Fransaskois auront leurs écoles," *L'Eau Vive*, 25 février 1988; André Deschamps, "Le tribunal confirme le droit des Fransaskois à la gestion," *L'Eau Vive*, 25 février 1988.

²⁵⁴ Rupert Baudais à Grant Devine, 25 février 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

²⁵⁵ Ron Hewitt to Bob Andrew, 21 March 1988. [PAS], Bob Andrew Fonds.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ Ron Hewitt to Bob Andrew, 21 March 1988. [PAS], Bob Andrew Fonds.

²⁵⁸ Ken Ritter to Mary-Lynn Charlton, 22 March 1988. [PAS], Bob Andrew Fonds; Saskatchewan Department of the Attorney General, "Notice of Appeal," 22 March 1988. [PAS], Bob Andrew Fonds.

language instruction could be integrated within the existing English language system, and in placing limits on section 23 solely based on economic considerations.²⁵⁹

But as Wimmer pointed out in his ruling, legal action could not be the sole basis of francophone education in Saskatchewan. Even if the CEF was right to claim governance as part of s. 23 rights under the *Charter*, "it is not for the judiciary...to pass upon the means by which such rights might be lawfully recognized."²⁶⁰ Section 23 provisions could not be implemented solely by the courts. It took the political and administrative machinery of government to create and maintain francophone school governance. Thus, despite the difficulties of politics and negotiations leading up to the Wimmer ruling, both the Fransaskois community and the government realized that they would have to work out a solution to the governance problem.

In May 1988 the government sat down with the Fransaskois to discuss the next steps for francophone education in the province. It did not, however, just speak with the community; Devine and Education Minister Lorne Hepworth also invited major players in Saskatchewan education, including the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA), the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) and the League of Education Administrators, Directors, and Superintendants (LEADS). While the CEF understood the implications that francophone governance would have for the provincial education system, it was offended that "Le gouvernement a convoqué tout ce monde à discuter de l'avenir de l'éducation des francophones en Saskatchewan."²⁶¹ During the meeting Wilfrid Denis described a number of disputes and governance problems that École canadienne-française had in Saskatoon, which "a surpris plusieurs des représentants anglophone qui croyaient que 'l'entente Saskatoon' fonctionnait à

²⁵⁹ CEF, "Notice of Appeal," 15 March 1988. [PAS], Bob Andrew Fonds.

²⁶⁰ *CEF v. Saskatchewan*, [1985] SKQB 5495, 4.

²⁶¹ CEF, "Rencontre avec le Ministre de l'Éducation Lorne Hepworth," bulletin in *L'Eau Vive*, juin 1988.

merveille."²⁶² Hepworth and the anglophone groups noted that they would respect the Wimmer decision and section 23 rights, but that they were concerned about how francophone governance would be applied.²⁶³

In June, the province signed a multi-million dollar deal with the federal government, following Saskatchewan's decision to repeal official bilingualism legislation after the *Mercurie* decision.²⁶⁴ Over a third of the \$63 million deal was to be used to help Saskatchewan establish francophone governance.²⁶⁵ However, it took almost a full year of foot-dragging on the issue for the Saskatchewan government to establish, in February 1989, the Coordinating Committee for the Governance of Francophone Schools by Francophones, chaired by Edgar Gallant. The committee featured representatives from the Fransaskois community, government, SSTA, STF, and LEADS. Gallant's final report, released in June 1989 recommended "a system under which no one has to lose and everyone, in one sense or another, stands to gain."²⁶⁶ Gallant recommended that "The management facilities involved must be equivalent to those of the majority school system, and the system must be under the effective control and management of the fransaskois."²⁶⁷

Following the report's conclusions, Saskatchewan created a task force in September 1989 which would propose amendments to the *Education Act*, transfer resources and staff to francophone schools, and inform the public about francophone education.²⁶⁸ Work progressed well and the administrative machinery was almost in place. Then, federal and constitutional

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.* The STF worried that its membership would be split between French and English-speaking members, while others worried about financing.

²⁶⁴ See chapter five.

²⁶⁵ Wilfrid Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 96.

²⁶⁶ *A Fransaskois Component for the Saskatchewan School System*, June 1989, 43. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁶⁸ Denis, "Francophone Education in Saskatchewan," 97.

politics intervened. In March 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada handed down its ruling in *Mahé v. Alberta*.²⁶⁹ A landmark ruling, *Mahé* affirmed that

Where the numbers warrant, s. 23 confers upon minority language parents a right to management and control over the educational facilities in which their children are taught. Such management and control is vital to ensure that their language and culture flourish. The English and the French versions of s. 23(3)(b), read together, support such an interpretation. The measure of management and control required by s. 23 may, in some circumstances and depending on the numbers of students to be served, warrant an independent school board.²⁷⁰

Mahé was a game-changer for the Saskatchewan government and the Fransaskois. It not only confirmed Wimmer's decision and governance rights as part of section 23, it also soured relations between the government and the community. A month after *Mahé*, Saskatchewan announced that "the province needs more time...some complex legal and constitutional issues must be resolved prior to enacting legislation."²⁷¹ The government's decision raised the ire of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Official Languages Commissioner D'Iberville Fortier, both of whom wrote public letters to Grant Devine denouncing the government's about-face on francophone schools.²⁷² The Regina *Leader Post* called it a "Sad day for the Fransaskois," arguing that "This delay is more than just a serious breach of the Saskatchewan government's promises. It puts Saskatchewan in direct conflict with the Supreme Court of Canada and the Canadian Constitution."²⁷³

As criticism poured in to Saskatchewan government offices from across Saskatchewan and Canada, government-community relations further deteriorated. The province's postponing of Fransaskois governance left the question in political limbo. In November 1990 a francophone parent group in Gravelbourg filed yet another legal suit against the province, arguing that

²⁶⁹ *Mahé v. Alberta*, [1990] 1 SCR 342.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Saskatchewan, "Press Release: More Time Needed for Implementation of Fransaskois School System," 23 April 1990. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

²⁷² Brian Mulroney to Grant Devine, 23 April 1990. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds. D'Iberville Fortier to Grant Devine, 26 April 1990. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

²⁷³ "Sad day for Fransaskois," *Leader Post*, 14 May 1990.

Saskatchewan was violating the constitution by not providing a francophone elementary school in the area.²⁷⁴ Devine argued that it simply cost too much.²⁷⁵ "In the present financial situation," Education Minister Ray Meiklejohn wrote to D'Iberville Fortier, "the province cannot easily allow any further strain on the economy."²⁷⁶

Devine's Progressive Conservative party lost the Saskatchewan general election on 21 October 1991 to the NDP. During Devine's tenure as premier, the Fransaskois went from optimism and hope to frustration and disillusionment. Even with court decisions and major studies favouring francophone school governance, the francophone community was unable to fully achieve its goals.

Conclusion

Between 1968 and 1991, the place of French in Saskatchewan schools was a controversial question. Although the provincial education system slowly moved from small amounts of French-language instruction towards full francophone control over francophone schools, it would be a mistake to view this progression as a smooth or easy historical process. On the contrary, the expansion of French-language education between 1968 and 1990 revealed the heavy weight of history. A school system originally designed to assimilate a population with diverse national, cultural, and linguistic origins did not yield easily to the efforts of an aggressive, well-organized minority group. School boards designed for local, democratic control were not necessarily well-suited or sympathetic to the Fransaskois' linguistic and cultural needs.

To say that the Fransaskois had difficulties in achieving francophone education and school governance is not to place all blame at the feet of the government, school boards, or even

²⁷⁴ "Parents launch legal action," *Leader Post*, 24 November 1990.

²⁷⁵ Randy Burton, "Province 'can't afford' francophone control of schools," *Star Phoenix*, 29 November 1990.

²⁷⁶ Ray Meiklejohn to D'Iberville Fortier, 21 March 1991. [*PAS*], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

the general public. A complex educational bureaucracy and financial pressures on the province at the end of the 1970s made establishing French-language schools difficult. Similar provincial financial pressures at the end of the 1980s, resulting from national and international economic forces, in addition to the fiscal challenges faced by the Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative government, made establishing a francophone school board politically and financially difficult.

Additional factors influencing the debate on French-language education in Saskatchewan do not, however, discount that there was a widely-held belief that what the Fransaskois wanted was simply unacceptable. It was special treatment for only one minority. It was fragmenting an already complex education system. It was conceding too much to French speakers. These views influenced policy and forced both the NDP and Progressive Conservative provincial governments to resist francophone pressures for more control over education, no matter how well-intentioned both governments may have been.

This chapter, therefore, demonstrates that while it may be possible for a minority group to influence and even modify a language regime using activism, negotiations, and legal tactics, changes are difficult to enact without favourable legislation. In the case of the Vonda dispute, the Fransaskois found themselves caught between a recalcitrant school board and a hesitant provincial government. Without the demographic means to influence the anglophone-controlled school board in Vonda, the Fransaskois turned to politics and then to the judicial system. But as their defeat in the Vonda case illustrated, they could not expect to win on any front without constitutional law on their side.

The new *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* reopened the possibility of using the courts. Still, with a new government in power the Fransaskois first tried using political negotiations. When relations between the Fransaskois and the province broke down, the

Fransaskois used the constitution to their advantage but would be disappointed with an ambivalent Court of Queen's Bench decision that kept power in the hands of the government. The Devine government was able to delay implementing Fransaskois school governance and left the question to the NDP under Roy Romanow.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Conscious of our Multicultural Heritage": Bilingualism and Provincial Cultural Policy, 1971-1982

En Saskatchewan, où les groupes d'origine ethnique autre que française et anglaise sont nombreux et importants, cela a pour conséquence générale que les Canadiens-français sont considérés comme un de ces groupes ethniques. Les Fransaskois sont placés devant un problème bien concret lorsqu'on leur demande de participer à des activités multiculturelles dans leur communauté: faut-il participer en anglais et accepter d'être traité comme un "groupe ethnique"; ou faut-il refuser et se placer ainsi en marge de sa communauté?¹

- Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan

Very few residents of Saskatchewan have experienced francophone culture at first hand. The French fact in Saskatchewan continues to be a matter of bilingual labels and a small community of francophones, smaller by far than the communities of German or Ukrainian speakers. The important cultural fact about Saskatchewan is the development of a distinctively Prairie culture from multicultural roots. We are a province of many cultures, or of one culture, depending on how the word is defined. Ours is not an English culture, though our principal language is English. Saskatchewan is the only Canadian province in which people of British descent and people of French descent together do not form a majority. We belong to neither of the two nations so often referred to in the current debate.²

- Allan Blakeney

Introduction

Saskatchewan was different from the rest of Canada. In the 1970s, while federal and provincial leaders drew battle lines over bilingualism, language rights, and the definition of Canada, Saskatchewan Premier Allan Blakeney reacted with growing concern. Where, and how, did Saskatchewan fit in to the bilingual and bicultural idea of Canada proposed by the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*? Nowhere, Blakeney answered.³ At meetings on national unity and the constitution Blakeney enjoyed reminding listeners that "Saskatchewan is

¹ ACFC, "La position de l'A.C.F.C. devant guider les Fransaskois dans leurs relations avec les groupes ethniques," 4 octobre 1981. *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan [PAS]*, Conseil culturel fransaskois Fonds.

² Saskatchewan, *Canadian Unity. Brief presented to the Task force on Canadian Unity by Premier Allan Blakeney*, 20 October 1977.

³ Even before Blakeney was elected, the western Canadian provinces expressed "coolness bordering on hostility" to language rights during early constitutional discussions leading up to the Victoria Charter between 1968 and 1971. Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan categorically refused the Victoria Charter's proposal to make French and English equal languages in their provincial legislatures. See Peter H. Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1993), 82-83 and 88.

the only province in which those of British and French origin, combined, form less than half the population. That makes us particularly conscious of our multicultural heritage."⁴

This chapter discusses the creation of multicultural policy in Saskatchewan between 1971 and 1982. During these years Saskatchewan went on the offensive, using multiculturalism to contest the redefinition of Canada as a bilingual and bicultural nation.⁵ Bilingualism did not fit with how Saskatchewan's political leaders or the majority of the population viewed the province and its history. Allan Blakeney and his newly-elected NDP government believed that the history of Saskatchewan and western Canada strongly undermined the bicultural thesis of the nation. In a 1980 speech to the National Press Club, for example, Saskatchewan Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs Roy Romanow noted that

My parents came to Saskatchewan from the Ukraine. They spoke not one word of French. They spoke not one word of English -- except for two short and imperfect sentences my father was taught on the ship coming over: 'Me Mike Romanow. Me Liberal'. When my father passed away, he still found it easier to speak Ukrainian than English. My mother, like thousands in the West, to this day, enjoys a full life in the west end of Saskatoon -- shopping, going to church, visiting friends -- using only the Ukrainian language. There's nothing unique in this kind of story in Saskatchewan. Instead of Ukrainian, the language might be German, Scandinavian, Dutch, Hungarian, Cree or Chipewyan, or Polish. Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada in which the people of British and French origins, taken together, make up less than half the population. The first language of many people, like myself, is neither of the two official languages - English nor French. The uniqueness of Saskatchewan -- its multicultural character -- is a product of the era in which it was settled and of the way the land shaped the people.⁶

⁴ Saskatchewan, *The Patriation and Amendment of the Constitution of Canada. Brief Presented to the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution by Honourable Allan Blakeney*, December 19, 1980. At the same time, more than 88% of the provincial population was born in Saskatchewan, placing it ahead of Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon in terms of overall native-born population. Canada, *Perspective Canada: A Compendium of Social Statistics*, vol. I (Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 1974), 271.

⁵ Evelyn Eager argues that Allan Blakeney in particular was "the one premier who could stand toe to toe with Trudeau" and that during his premiership in the 1970s he emerged as one of the most articulate proponents of western Canadian interests. Eager, *Saskatchewan Government: Politics and Pragmatism* (Saskatoon, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980), 186-187. The 1970s began with the Victoria Conference in 1971 which Peter Russell described as the beginning of Canada's "mega-constitutional politics." See Peter H. Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* 3rd ed. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004).

⁶ "Notes for Remarks by Hon. Roy Romanow, Saskatchewan Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to National Press Club, Ottawa," 13 August 1980.

Romanow's own background represented both the past and present of Saskatchewan according to the government: multicultural origins and hard work in the search for a better life. Biculturalism, on the other hand, characterized central Canada, an older and more distant region. It simply did not correspond to the Saskatchewan identity. Of course, there were francophones in the province, but where they fit into the province's history and what rights they had was an open question.

Region and Nation: The Political Community and Early Multicultural Ideas

Federal government expansion into cultural policy, especially official bilingualism, precipitated a crisis of political identity in Saskatchewan.⁷ As political scientist David E. Smith argues,

Federal language policy enhanced the West's real or imagined disabilities in the federation. In its origin and operation it was a potent reminder of the region's peripheral location, while it presented practical difficulties for implementation even for those sympathetic to its purpose. Essentially, bilingualism was a simpler tune than westerners wanted to hear. The plural ethnic base of the West, which had survived the Anglo-Saxon's enthusiastic Canadianization policies of the 1920s, could not easily be fitted into a bicultural interpretation of Canadian society...since the passage of the Official Languages Act, the prairie provinces have moved with determination into the same field. Whether or not intended, the result has been to identify the provincial governments even more than the federal government with multiculturalism policies but, coincidentally, to defuse the opposition to federal bilingualism policies.⁸

Smith called for further study of "the reasons why provincial governments and the populace they serve have come to accept multiculturalism."⁹ In this vein, this chapter argues that Saskatchewan's multiculturalism policies cannot be understood without taking into account the

⁷ As Marcel Martel and Martin Pâquet argue, Ottawa's solution of institutional bilingualism was "part of a major transformation of Canada's symbolic order" and as such provoked opposition from western Canadians and their provincial political leaders. *Speaking Up*, 148-156. See also Daniel Bourgeois, *Canadian Bilingual Districts: From Cornerstone to Tombstone* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006); René-Jean Ravault, *La francophonie clandestine: L'aide du Secrétariat d'État aux communautés francophones hors-Québec de 1968 à 1976* (Ottawa, Institut des communications sociales, 1983).

⁸ David E. Smith, *The Regional Decline of a National Party: Liberals on the Prairies* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1981), 133. See also Evelyn Eager, *Saskatchewan Government*, 186-188.

⁹ Smith, *The Regional Decline of a National Party*, 135.

influence of bilingualism and language politics.¹⁰ Bilingualism and federal government language policies forced Saskatchewan to change the way it understood its own history and politics.¹¹ If Saskatchewan was different from central Canada -- multicultural, not bilingual -- the province would have to challenge the historical and social principles of official bilingualism with a homegrown cultural policy.¹² But finding a historical principle was not easy, since the ideals of Britishness that dominated Saskatchewan's early history could not be the basis for the province's new identity. Across the country English Canadians were working towards abandoning their strongly British and imperial ideas of the nation by the 1960s and 1970s.¹³ As historian José Igartua argues, this abandonment was subtle but worthy of study because it reveals how English Canadians viewed themselves: "we can gain a better understanding of the last fifty years of

¹⁰ The idea that multiculturalism is a "political" or politicized program is supported by a number of critical works published in the early 1980s. See for example Kas Mazurek, "Defusing a Radical Social Policy: The Undermining of Multiculturalism," in Stella Hryniuk (ed.), *Twenty Years of Multiculturalism: Successes and Failures* (Winnipeg, St. John's College Press, 1992), 17-28; Evelyn Kallen, "Multiculturalism: Ideology, Policy, and Reality," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 1 (1982), 51-63; Lance W. Roberts and Rodney A. Clifton "Exploring the Ideology of Canadian Multiculturalism," *Canadian Public Policy* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1982), 88-94; Manoly Lupul, "The Political Implementation of Multiculturalism," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 1 (1982), 93-102.

¹¹ "Collective expression of symbolic frustration by significant social groups and perceived problems of institutional legitimacy may lead authorities to intervene. Their interventions can work to improve the symbolic/cultural system - e.g., the exploration of history for new symbols, the introduction of new ceremonies, the enrichment of existing rituals, the encouragement of cultural creation, and so on. On the other hand, the interventions can aim primarily at redefining the symbolic/cultural component so as to establish a more satisfactory correspondence between public institutions and the identity, culture characteristics, or lifestyle of particular segments of the population. This symbolic transformation can entail additions, the removal of items that irritate certain groups, or selective emphasis depending on particular circumstances...multiculturalism policy is best understood in this light." Raymond Breton, "Multiculturalism and Canadian Nation-Building," in Alain Cairns and Cynthia Williams (eds.), *The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986), 32.

¹² Blakeney's government took on an entrepreneurial role in a number of economic areas, notably oil and potash exploration. In his political memoirs he discusses how this approach reflected his wish for an "activist government" as opposed to Liberal premier Ross Thatcher's bare-bones, business-driven government. Blakeney, *An Honourable Calling*, 3-5. See also Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 419-420; Dennis Gruending, *Promises to Keep: A Political Biography of Allan Blakeney* (Saskatoon, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990), 84-95 and John Richards and Larry Pratt, *Prairie Capitalism: Power and Influence in the New West* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979).

¹³ A number of authors argue that the abandonment of a white, English Canada was critical in the founding of multicultural policies in the 1970s. See for example Marek Debicki, "The Double Mythology of Multiculturalism in Canada," in Stella Hryniuk (ed.), *Twenty Years of Multiculturalism: Successes and Failures* (Winnipeg, St. John's College Press, 1992), 29-35; Jatinder Mann, "The introduction of multiculturalism in Canada and Australia, 1960s-1970s," *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 3 (2012), 483-503; C.P. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964-1968* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); José Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-1971* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

Canadian history by viewing transformations in representations of national identity in English-speaking Canada as a historical process."¹⁴

Multiculturalism would be the new principle for Saskatchewan, its answer to Ottawa. By promoting multiculturalism the Saskatchewan government could legitimize its criticisms of bilingualism, participate in constitutional debates, and have its own perspective heard without appearing anti-francophone or anti-diversity. This interpretation is consistent with studies of early multiculturalism policy in other western Canadian provinces. In Alberta, for example, it was introduced

...as a strategic manoeuvre to bolster and defend Alberta's compact perspective on federalism and to forestall the adoption of any constitutional change that would perpetuate an idea of the Canadian federation in which Alberta would have difficulty recognizing itself as an equal and autonomous partner. [Premier Harry] Strom equated the alienation felt by non-English and non-French Canadians as second-class citizens to Alberta's own "status anxiety," and to Western alienation more generally.¹⁵

Multiculturalism policy gave western Canadian provincial governments their own new political identity which allowed them to resist the federal government's re-casting of Canada as bilingual. It also responded to the void left by English Canada's abandonment of Anglo-centric values and interpretation of history. Much more than modest policies for funding heritage projects, museums, cultural associations, and teaching in languages other than French or English, multiculturalism in Saskatchewan opened a space for the province to redefine its political culture as diverse, pioneering, and open. It allowed Saskatchewan to go on the offensive and articulate its culture in a positive light.

¹⁴ Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution*, 227.

¹⁵ Christopher Alcantara, Renan Levine and James C. Walz, "Canadian First Ministers' Conferences and Heresthetic Strategies: Explaining Alberta's Position on Multiculturalism at the 1971 Victoria Conference," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 2 (Spring 2014), 101.

At the same time, multiculturalism allowed the provincial government to place all non-English speaking minorities, including the Fransaskois, on the same level, thereby preserving its language regime. Indeed, rather than recognize the founding values and their continuity in Saskatchewan, the provincial government used multiculturalism in order to re-interpret its own history, using its history of immigration and contemporary cultural diversity to assert that its history was multicultural and therefore different from the bicultural history of central Canada.¹⁶ More importantly, a multicultural Saskatchewan would not have to recognize official bilingualism and other political aspirations of the Fransaskois community. Herein lies francophone reluctance to support multiculturalism, especially given that it emerged as a policy explicitly critical of bilingualism.¹⁷ This reluctance was widespread amongst French-speaking communities in Canada.¹⁸

The Fransaskois community and the Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan (ACFC) viewed multiculturalism with suspicion and concern, since the defining of Canada as multicultural rather than bicultural had considerable implications for language policy and French-language rights in Saskatchewan. The historical interpretation of

¹⁶ The existence of numerous ethnic groups does not mean the existence of a sociological reality of multiculturalism. As David E. Smith explains, "The history of the West indicates that a heterogeneous people does not readily transform itself into a multicultural society. If that were the case, it would have happened long ago." Smith, *The Regional Decline of a National Party*, 17.

¹⁷ "...underlying the actions and posture of the French-speaking spokesmen of the West on linguistic and cultural questions was and is a strong belief in the basic duality of Canada itself." Robert Painchaud, "The Franco-Canadians of Western Canada and Multiculturalism," in *Multiculturalism as State Policy*, Second Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism (Ottawa, Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism, 1976), 30. See also Raymond Hébert, "Francophone Perspectives on Multiculturalism," in Stella Hryniuk (ed.), *Twenty Years of Multiculturalism: Successes and Failures* (Winnipeg, St. John's College Press, 1992), 59-72. Yet, western Canadian francophones still participated in the first congresses leading to multiculturalism in their respective provinces. See for example "La mosaïque culturelle au Manitoba," *La Liberté et le Patriote*, 7 octobre 1970, 4.

¹⁸ See for example Paul-Émile Gosselin, "Multiculturalisme," *Revue du Conseil de la vie française* 26, nos. 3-4 (novembre-décembre 1971), 57-58; Léger Comeau, "Multiculturalism - The Francophone Viewpoint," in *Multiculturalism as State Policy*, Second Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism (Ottawa, Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism, 1976), 27-28 and Guy Rocher, "Multiculturalism: The Doubts of a Francophone," in *Ibid.*, 47-53; Ronald Wardhaugh, *Language and Nationhood: The Canadian Experience* (Vancouver, New Star Books, 1983).

Saskatchewan as multicultural rather than founded by both English and French speakers was simply unacceptable to the Fransaskois community. As such, the potential for conflict between the Fransaskois, the government, and other minority groups was great. The Fransaskois would not accept being defined as one ethnic group among many, while the Saskatchewan government, and many Saskatchewanians, viewed francophones as demographically insignificant and historically not more important than any other group. The Fransaskois community also had much to say about the multicultural rendition of Saskatchewan history. The community's political campaign for bilingualism seriously challenged the redefinition of Saskatchewan as multicultural because it put into question the government's new historical narrative. If the government was serious about cultural diversity, then, how did it react to the activism and demands of a well-organized minority group?

That the Fransaskois at first perceived multiculturalism with suspicion did not mean that they eschewed it entirely. Nor did francophones in Saskatchewan oppose cultural diversity. On the contrary, they had an ambivalent relationship to multiculturalism. They knew all too well the bitter defeats of the past and what life as a minority group meant. They were sympathetic to the plight of other minorities in the province and attempted to influence the establishment of multiculturalism policy, not only to help other groups in principle but also to take advantage of programs for their own purposes. In 1971, for example, the ACFC argued that while French and English were Canada's official languages, any new constitution of the country should recognise all "collectivités culturelles," including

les groupes d'expression indienne et métisse, esquimaude, italienne, ukrainienne, etc. Si ces réalités culturelles canadiennes ne sont pas encouragées d'une façon positive dans la constitution, nous craignons qu'elles continuent de subir une suppression inconsciente néfaste, sous prétexte qu'elles sont hors-la-loi.¹⁹

¹⁹ "L'Association Culturelle Franco-Canadienne de la Saskatchewan et la Constitution," *La Liberté et le Patriote*, 27 janvier 1971, 3.

It was a difficult position for the Fransaskois. It was an equally difficult political scenario for Allan Blakeney, who had to balance a burgeoning regional political consciousness in western Canada with the needs of national unity and constitutional reform.

Saskatchewan did not invent multiculturalism policy but it was the first jurisdiction in North America to enact multiculturalism legislation in 1974. Somewhat curiously, however, scholars have paid little attention to Saskatchewan's cultural programming and how it fits into the broader provincial political community. Most analyses of multiculturalism in Canada focus on its federal and national implications.²⁰ These studies are interested in the results produced by the cultural mixture of Canada. Their deficiency, Canadian philosopher Ian Angus explains, is that

What is left out of this formulation is the role of empire and its succeeding form of state power in establishing the field within which mixing will take place and the relationship between the mixture that is English Canada with First Nations and Quebec. The dominant philosophy in English Canada has been established precisely through ignoring the central role of empire.²¹

It is worth again quoting Angus' summation of the curious intellectual paradox caused by English Canada's shift away from a British identity in the 1960s:

It is widely recognized that English Canadian political culture has focused on community and plurality, but this conception contains the risk of becoming simply apologetic and ideological if it ignores the critique of empire that has been equally

²⁰ See for example Alan C. Cairns, John C. Courtney, Peter MacKinnon, Hans J. Michelmann, and David E. Smith (eds.), *Citizenship, Diversity, and Pluralism: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 1999); Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliot, *Engaging Diversity: Multiculturalism in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Nelson Thomson, 2002); Stephen Tierney (ed.), *Multiculturalism and the Canadian Constitution* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Richard J.F. Day, *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). As Claude Couture explains in "Le nationalisme des minorités raciales: Daniel Coleman au carrefour des discours de la gauche canadienne," in Frédéric Boily and Donald Ipperciel (dirs.), *D'une nation à l'autre: Discours nationaux au Canada* (Quebec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2011), 169-181, other studies which use postcolonial theory or postmodern analyses, focusing on race, gender, and class, tend to ignore the role that language and the French-Canadian question plays in constructing the English-Canadian nation. See for example Himani Bannerji, *Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism, and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2000).

²¹ Angus, *The Undiscovered Country: Essays in Canadian Intellectual Culture* (Edmonton, Athabasca University Press, 2013), 9.

constitutive of its distinctive character. English Canadian culture is thus caught between its origin in empire and its attempt to adequately critique that origin. English Canadian intellectual culture acquires itself well when it consciously articulates the project of throwing off empire and judges critically failures to do so.²²

One of the few works that attempts to make sense of the political meaning of empire and the multiculturalism-bilingualism nexus is Eve Haque's *Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework*, which offers a deconstructive analysis of the two political ideals. Haque, however, has little to say about francophone minorities save for their participation in "a new, unisonant formulation of nation-building; one that could preserve white-settler hegemony at the same time as it disavowed its racial exclusions."²³ While the retooling of Canada towards a bicultural nation undoubtedly exerted new pressures and challenges on indigenous peoples, it should also be remembered that Canada's early nation-building ideology was strongly anti-French, especially in western Canada. In many respects, the Fransaskois believed that they too were a colonized people, whose early presence was disregarded by English Canadians. Furthermore, the federal government was not the only player in the multicultural game. Provincial governments also participated actively in their own forms of nation-building ("province-building"²⁴) and cultural construction. These processes had similarities and differences across provinces and excluded any number of different peoples. In the Saskatchewan case, one of the peoples excluded by the Saskatchewan multiculturalism province-building process were the Fransaskois.

²² *Ibid.*, x.

²³ Eve Haque, *Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework: Language, Race, and Belonging in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2012), 239.

²⁴ Gerald Friesen uses the term "province-building" in his numerous works on the meaning of region and the role of "provincialism" in fostering western Canadian political identity in the 1970s. See for example "The Prairies as Region: The Contemporary Meaning of an Old Idea," in *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History* (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 1996), 165-181.

Studies that examine provincial multiculturalism tend to focus on broader content and policy implications rather than the historical processes surrounding their creation.²⁵ No serious consideration has yet been given to why Saskatchewan, a province founded on British political and cultural values, would set out to fundamentally change its own political identity.²⁶ The role that bilingualism and biculturalism played in influencing the reconstruction of Saskatchewan's identity remains to be explained. This omission in the literature is somewhat surprising given that the 1970s were a period of fundamental economic and societal transformations in Saskatchewan.²⁷ The increasing importance of natural resource exploitation, especially potash, brought considerable economic change to Saskatchewan, while the rise in separatism in Quebec and the dominance of the national unity question in federal politics led to major socio-cultural changes in Saskatchewan as well.²⁸

Multicultural, Not Bilingual: Saskatchewan Makes its Move

²⁵ See for example Joe Garcea, "Provincial Multiculturalism Policies in Canada, 1974-2004: A Content Analysis," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 38, no. 3 (2006), 1-20. One exception is David McGrane's excellent study of the ideological processes surrounding Saskatchewan multicultural policy, "From Liberal Multiculturalism to Civic Republicanism: An Historical Perspective on Multiculturalism Policy in Manitoba and Saskatchewan," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 43, nos. 1-2 (2011), 81-108. McGrane, however, also neglects to examine the role the bilingualism and biculturalism played in influencing multicultural policy in Saskatchewan.

²⁶ Bill Waiser reminded readers that Saskatchewan's early political history was strongly British and imperialist, but he also neglects to focus on the specific elements of those political ideals. See for example "The Myth of Multiculturalism in Early Saskatchewan," in Jene M. Porter, *Perspectives of Saskatchewan* (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2009) 57-73. Doug Owrain thoroughly discussed the British ideal of the West, which was often anti-French, in *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980). Other western Canadian historians such as John Herd Thompson briefly touch upon the role of Ukrainians and other ethnic groups in opposing bilingualism in western Canada, but a more extensive analysis of the topic has yet to be undertaken. See Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1998), 159-164.

²⁷ Evelyn Eager, *Saskatchewan Government*, 184-192.

²⁸ Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 408-409; see also Allan Blakeney, "Reflections on Innovations I Hoped to See" in Eleanor D. Glor (ed.), *Policy Innovation in the Saskatchewan Public Sector, 1971-1982* (North York: Captus Press, 1997), 253-270; John F. Conway, *The Rise of the New West: The History of a Region in Confederation* (Toronto, James Lorimer and Company, 2014).

Shortly after the provinces and federal government sat down to discuss amending the Canadian constitution in June 1971²⁹, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced a new federal policy for "toutes les cultures au Canada" that fall. This multiculturalism policy held that while Canada had two official languages, the country had "no official culture."³⁰ Allan Blakeney immediately asked Roy Romanow, his right-hand man and minister responsible for Cultural Affairs, to look closely at Trudeau's new policy and Book IV of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. With the federal government's expansion into cultural matters and the defining of the nation, Blakeney's priority was maintaining as much provincial control over cultural matters as possible, especially official languages in the courts and legislature.³¹

In January 1972, Romanow reported back to Blakeney and proposed guiding principles for multiculturalism and bilingualism in Saskatchewan:

The Province of Saskatchewan has always been a multicultural society and all of us share in its heritage...It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan explicitly reject biculturalism as an historical and contemporary reality for Canada and affirm that this is a multicultural country with many languages, two of which, English and French, are official. The broad objective of our government should be to assure that the diverse cultural life of the people of Saskatchewan is maintained as a dynamic source of creativity, both for this province and for the wider Canadian society...Any other policy will have serious adverse social, cultural and political consequences for Canada in its second century.³²

It is important to understand the significance of Romanow's briefing because it set the tone for Saskatchewan's language and cultural policy for over a decade. Romanow made a clear distinction between French and English as official, national languages on the one hand and Saskatchewan's cultural reality on the other. Multiculturalism would act as the limiting factor on

²⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the failed Victoria Charter and mega-constitutional politics before 1971 see Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 72-91.

³⁰ Canada, "News Release/Communiqué," 8 October 1971. ACFC Fonds.

³¹ Roy S. Meldrum to Allan Blakeney, "Canadian Constitutional Charter Briefing," 5 October 1971, [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds; Allan Blakeney to Pierre Trudeau, no date, [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds. Saskatchewan had serious reservations about article 16 of the Victoria Charter, which allowed any provincial legislature to declare itself officially bilingual but did not allow provinces to opt out of doing so without federal government permission.

³² Roy Romanow to Allan Blakeney, 12 January 1972. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

Trudeau's official bilingualism initiatives. In federal institutions, Saskatchewan would accept English and French as national official languages, but the application of official French-English bilingualism to provincial government institutions would be discouraged on cultural, political, and economic grounds. Saskatchewan could accept two languages nationally, but there were limits to how far bilingualism would apply in multicultural Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan took its first steps towards promoting this vision in May 1972 with the establishment of the Department of Culture and Youth.³³ Premier Blakeney, speaking in favour of the bill to create the new department, explained that a large part of its activities would be re-interpreting and promoting Saskatchewan's history by drawing on the "wealth of material" in the province's archives.³⁴ Romanow expanded on this rationale in his remarks to the new department:

The defence of the multilingual-multicultural resources of the Province of Saskatchewan is the duty of all of us and the focal point of such defence will reside in this new Department of Culture and Youth and in this Government. I hope that the Department of Culture and Youth will be the focal point for the advancement and promotion of those great cultures...The significance of this legislation is that from now on there will be in this Government an identifiable cultural presence for all ethnic groups who appreciate and all people who appreciate the development of culture in our province.³⁵

The department's mandate was therefore "defensive" against the cultural assimilation of minority groups, but also "positive" in that it would advance a certain ideal of Saskatchewan. More importantly, Culture and Youth would defend Saskatchewan against the bicultural idea of

³³ "My Government recognizes the need to assure that the multi-cultural and recreational activities of the people of Saskatchewan are freely developed as a dynamic source of creativity for all our residents." Speech from the Throne, Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 17th Legislature, vol. 12, 4 (24 February 1972). Ed Tchorzewski noted that creating the Department of Culture and Youth was "The Province of Saskatchewan's official entry into the multicultural area." Ed Tchorzewski to Allan Blakeney and All Cabinet Ministers, 13 September 1973, [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

³⁴ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 17th Legislature, vol. 12, 1798 (18 April 1972).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1791-1792.

Canada promoted by Ottawa.³⁶ It would work towards a well-defined cultural policy which would "present a coherent picture to other governments."³⁷

The second major part of the new department's mandate, Romanow continued, was to create "a sense of one community here in Saskatchewan without at the same time causing undue sacrifices and asking undue compromises of any individual group of any linguistic or cultural society in our province."³⁸ In other words, as stipulated in new legislation, the Department of Culture and Youth would promote diversity but also foster cultural and political unity at a time when regional political consciousness was on the rise. Multiculturalism would be promoted by "programs and activities that provide for the orderly cultural, physical and social development of the province or of any class or classes of persons within the province."³⁹

The Fransaskois community viewed the federal government's new policy and Saskatchewan's move towards multiculturalism with concern. In late January 1972 the ACFC Board of Directors met to discuss its own position regarding Prime Minister Trudeau's October 1971 multiculturalism announcement. An internal report issued after the meeting described multiculturalism as raising "un longue et pénible débat" among the ACFC executive.⁴⁰ Multiculturalism, the ACFC noted, threatened to "placer le groupe francophone sur un même pied que les autres groupes ethniques ce qui aurait comme effet de réduire la culture française à un folklore."⁴¹

³⁶ One could liken the position to Northrop Frye's classic notion of the "garrison mentality" in Canadian cultural consciousness, which stems from the physical vastness of geography (which would refer well to the isolation and uniqueness imposed by Saskatchewan's geography) and cultural isolation from Britain and the United States. See Frye, "Conclusion," in Carl F. Klinck (ed.), *The Literary History of Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1945), 224.

³⁷ Saskatchewan, "Meeting on Culture. Minutes," 22 September 1972. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

³⁸ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 17th Legislature, vol. 12, 1793 (18 April 1972).

³⁹ *Act to Establish the Department of Culture and Youth*, 1972 c. 29, s. 5 (Saskatchewan).

⁴⁰ ACFC, "Rapport d'activités de l'A.C.F.C. depuis le 26e congrès général," [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

⁴¹ ACFC, "Procès-verbal," 27 janvier 1972. [PAS], ACFC Fonds, 1.

The Fransaskois were well aware that they were, demographically speaking, one minority group among many in Saskatchewan and western Canada. Their political identity rested primarily on history. Because they saw themselves as one of Saskatchewan's founding peoples -- indeed, as the first Europeans in western Canada -- the Fransaskois objected strongly to being compared with other minority groups. They also insisted that their historic link to Quebec gave them a different status in the West. The French Canadians, the ACFC believed, were exceptional because when they arrived they were simply moving from one part of Canada to another. This history distinguished them from other minority groups who left their home countries to settle in the West. As one ACFC policy document on multiculturalism argued:

Une autre des grandes lacunes du multiculturalisme tel qu'il est conçu actuellement au Canada, c'est qu'il s'appuie sur une conception fautive de l'histoire de ce pays. Il ignore les origines réelles du Canada et veut faire des Canadiens-français un groupe d'immigrants comme les autres. Or les Canadiens-français sont arrivés au pays dans des circonstances bien différentes, qui expliquent leur développement particulier, et encore aujourd'hui, leur situation particulière. Les français qui sont venue au pays n'étaient pas des immigrants qui changeaient de pays; ils venaient fonder un pays. Ils n'ont pas échangé leur culture en venant ici, comme le font des immigrants; ils ont développé une culture originale et francophone sur ce continent.⁴²

The Fransaskois' historic link to Quebec also provided a contemporary political advantage over other minorities. The political weight of Quebec in Canada, as well as demographic preponderance over other minority groups at the national level, nourished Fransaskois activism and feelings of exceptionalism. In this vein, the ACFC believed that any Fransaskois political approach to multiculturalism ought to "garantir et soutenir la situation majoritaire du groupe francophone par rapport aux autres groupes ethniques."⁴³ Some members of the ACFC, however, disagreed with placing the Fransaskois above other ethnic groups and

⁴² ACFC, "La position de l'A.C.F.C. devant guider les Fransaskois dans leurs relations avec les groupes ethniques," 1981. [PAS], Conseil culturel fransaskois Fonds.

⁴³ ACFC, "Procès-verbal," 27 janvier 1972. [PAS], ACFC Fonds, 2.

instead argued in favour of offering help, thereby slowing their assimilation and creating new political alliances. Indeed, the political relationship between francophone minorities in western Canada and other linguistic/cultural minorities groups was neither clear nor straightforward. While they were sometimes in competition with francophones, non-francophone groups such as the Ukrainians recognized the importance of French-Canadian nationalism in generating ethnic consciousness in Canada and viewed francophone minority political activism with a mixture of admiration and jealousy.⁴⁴

After a number of meetings in January 1972 the ACFC established its official position on multiculturalism. The Fransaskois would conditionally support the policy provided that "les activités culturelles en langue française soient favorisées par les autorités officielles, tout aussi bien que celles en langue anglaise, d'un océan à l'autre" and that Saskatchewan recognize French as an official language in the province.⁴⁵ This new ACFC policy did nothing to clarify the often blurry and tense relationship between the Fransaskois and ethnic groups seeking similar protections for their own cultures and languages.

Allan Blakeney's new government, elected in June 1971, was unaware of Fransaskois objections to multiculturalism.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the government moved to create ties with the Fransaskois community. In March 1972, Frank Bogdasavich, Special Advisor to the Attorney General and later Deputy Minister of Culture and Youth, reported to Jack Kinzel, Clerk of the Executive Council and one of Blakeney's closest advisors, that the government's "contact with

⁴⁴ See for example Bohdan Bociurkiw, "The Federal Policy of Multiculturalism and the Ukrainian-Canadian Community," in Manoly R. Lupul (ed.), *Ukrainian Canadians, Multiculturalism, and Separatism: An Assessment* (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1978), 102.

⁴⁵ ACFC, "Multiculturalisme. Position de l'A.C.F.C.," 30 janvier 1972. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

⁴⁶ Government turnover was a perennial political challenge for the Fransaskois community. As ACFC President Irène Chabot noted in 1982 following the election of Grant Devine's Progressive Conservatives, "la compréhension des revendications des Fransaskois se perd" when new governments were voted in. As a result the ACFC had to constantly lobby newly elected governments in order to ensure that its political goals were met. "Etre fransaskois c'est une affaire de tête et de coeur qui s'exprime en vivant," *L'Eau Vive*, 17 février 1982.

this cultural group is not yet extensive."⁴⁷ The government likely viewed the francophone community as one among many ethnic groups. In the same letter, Bogdasavich remarked: "Balancing the various demands of increasingly sensitive cultural groups in the province is going to assure us of an interesting challenge in the Department of Culture."⁴⁸ Indeed, the government seemed unaware of the political tenacity of the Fransaskois community and the pressure that the ACFC and French speakers would soon bring to bear in favour of official bilingualism and French-language education in Saskatchewan.

By 1973, Saskatchewan's Department of Culture and Youth was ready to take further steps towards adopting multiculturalism legislation and formalizing policy. On 13 September, Culture and Youth Minister Ed Tchorzewski, a former schoolteacher and rising star in Blakeney's government, shared the first proposals for a provincial multicultural policy with cabinet.⁴⁹ "Saskatchewan should lead the way in this area due to the fact that it is the only province in Canada whose inhabitants, in the majority, are of the non-British and non-French origins," the document noted.⁵⁰ This demographic reality resulted from "a peculiar historical development in comparison to other regions of the country...Saskatchewan has always been a multicultural society and all of us share that heritage."⁵¹ This history of the province and region set it apart from other parts of Canada, and therefore necessitated a different language policy from those other regions:

It is true that in the history and development of Canada [the British and French Canadians] have made a special contribution (although in the prairie provinces this is less so in comparison to other regions of the country). However, within the

⁴⁷ Frank Bogdasavich to Jack Kinzel, "Background on French Organizations in Saskatchewan," 28 March 1972, [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Brett Quiring, "Tchorzewski, Edwin Laurence," in *Saskatchewan Politicians: Lives [PAS]t and Present* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004), 222-223.

⁵⁰ Saskatchewan, Department of Culture and Youth, "Department Memo. Multicultural Policy for Saskatchewan," 13 September 1973, [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

terms of reference of multiculturalism in Saskatchewan, they are in the same level as the other ethno-cultural groups.⁵²

The department's 1973-1974 annual report adopted a similar stance in describing its multicultural programming:

The objective of the Multicultural Program is to develop a sense and an appreciation of Saskatchewan's diverse ethno-cultural nature among the people of the province. The program is attempting to foster the retention of Saskatchewan's multicultural and plurilingual society. Although the Government of Saskatchewan recognizes English and French as the official languages of Canada, it recognizes Saskatchewan is rich in the variety of languages spoken in the province. In order to use this asset for the benefit of all, a multicultural policy must, therefore see diversity to be a broadening, rather than fragmenting, influence to enrich the people of Saskatchewan.⁵³

Similar to Romanow's recommendations to Blakeney just over a year earlier, Tchorzewski proposed that the provincial government "reject biculturalism as an historical and contemporary reality for Canada" and "define the word 'bilingualism' as a capacity in any two languages and assert that the languages of our other ethno-cultural groups, should be regarded as 'national' or 'Canadian' languages."⁵⁴ This distinction is crucial to understanding how Blakeney's government understood language rights in Saskatchewan. The government believed that French language rights had to be considered and implemented in the context of multiculturalism, based on the belief that Saskatchewan was a multicultural society. Bilingualism could therefore mean English and French, or English and Ukrainian, or any other minority languages -- not English and French along the lines of what Ottawa was thinking. Tchorzewski noted that this principle carried some political risks for federal-provincial relations as "there is a certain element in the nation that sees Western Canada as being 'narrow' and basically 'anti-French' because many Western Canadians

⁵² *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵³ Saskatchewan, Department of Culture and Youth, *Annual Report, 1973-1974*.

⁵⁴ Saskatchewan, Department of Culture and Youth, "Department Memo. Multicultural Policy for Saskatchewan," 13 September 1973, [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

have been and continue to be, for the most part, opposed to bilingualism."⁵⁵ Westerners were not against French, Tchorzewski's brief argued, but rather against "the misuse of the word 'bilingual' to explain this concept."⁵⁶

A Popular Vision: Seminar '73 and Saskatchewan Multiculturalism

The second pillar of Saskatchewan's early multiculturalism policy was a public forum organised by the Department of Culture and Youth. The event, dubbed "Seminar '73," was held the same month the province drafted its own policy proposals. The government hoped that it would help determine priorities for multiculturalism by consulting individual citizens and a number of different organizations such as the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, the Regina and Saskatoon Folk Art Councils, the University of Saskatchewan, and various ethnocultural representative organizations.⁵⁷ Seminar '73 resembled Manitoba's first "Mosaic Congress" in October 1970, a public policy seminar that would "assist in retaining and developing the many cultures" of Manitoba.⁵⁸ According to Tchorzewski, Seminar '73 was "a turning point toward the development of a cultural policy for the Province of Saskatchewan."⁵⁹ Multiculturalism would be created in collaboration with the public, allowing the government to discuss its vision of Saskatchewan history and culture with various individuals and organizations representing ethnic minorities of the province.

The Fransaskois participated in Seminar '73 despite their doubts about multiculturalism. When the government established the event's steering committee in July, it appointed prominent

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ "Second Meeting of the Steering Committee for Seminar '73," 22 July 1973. [PAS], ACFC Fonds, 4.

⁵⁸ As quoted in Manoly R. Lupul, *The Politics of Multiculturalism: A Ukrainian-Canadian Memoir* (Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2005), 126.

⁵⁹ Saskatchewan, *Report on proceedings of seminar '73: Multicultural Saskatchewan...an opportunity for action, a challenge*, 27-29 September 1973, 1.

community leader Roland Pinsonneault, then Assistant Director of the ACFC.⁶⁰ The Fransaskois were also represented on the committee by Louis Julé in his capacity as Executive Director of Cultural Activities in the Department of Culture and Youth.⁶¹ Dr. Zenon Pohorecky, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Saskatchewan, represented the Ukrainian community, while the German and Greek communities were also represented by prominent members.⁶² The committee began its work by asking any interested individuals and ethnic organizations to fill out a questionnaire to establish discussion themes for the Seminar in September. Fifteen different groups responded. The top discussion priority for 14 out of 15 organizations was "Cultural Activities," followed by support for "Language."⁶³

The Fransaskois, although active in multicultural politics, were less involved in setting the early tone for multiculturalism policy than other minority groups such the Ukrainians. Members of Saskatchewan's Ukrainian community were enthusiastic participants in Seminar '73 and the establishment of Saskatchewan multicultural policy from its earliest days. As a number of scholars have noted, Ukrainians in western Canada led the way not only in driving multiculturalism policy, but also in opposing biculturalism.⁶⁴ Well-organized, educated, and politically connected⁶⁵, Ukrainians had reservations about biculturalism which dated back to the

⁶⁰ Pinsonneault also served as discussion chairperson during Seminar '73. Ed Tchorzewski to Roland Pinsonneault, 18 September 1973. [PAS], Ed Tchorzewski Fonds.

⁶¹ "First Meeting of Steering Committee for the Multicultural Seminar," 5 July 1973. [PAS], Ed Tchorzewski Fonds.

⁶² Saskatchewan, *Report on proceedings of seminar '73*, 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁴ See for example Julia Lalonde, "The Roots of Multiculturalism: Ukrainian-Canadian Involvement in the Multiculturalism Discussion of the 1960s as an Example of the Position of the 'Third Force'," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 38, no. 1 (2006), 47-64; Bohdan Bociurkiw, "The Federal Policy of Multiculturalism and the Ukrainian-Canadian Community," in Manoly R. Lupul (ed.), *Ukrainian Canadians, Multiculturalism, and Separatism: An Assessment* (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1978), 98-128; John Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, 159-164; Marcel Martel and Martin Pâquet, *Speaking Up: A History of Language and Politics in Canada and Quebec*, Trans. Patricia Dumas (Toronto, Between the Lines, 2012), 122-123.

⁶⁵ As of 1972, the Ukrainians had 42 different organizations across Canada, behind only Italians (66), Poles (45), and Germans (43) out of 56 different ethnic groups in Canada. Canada, *Perspective Canada*, 282.

Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.⁶⁶ While they were undoubtedly sympathetic towards the Fransaskois and identified with some of their struggles against discrimination and linguistic assimilation, they did not view the Fransaskois as exceptional among Saskatchewan's minority groups. Rather, they understood themselves to be one of western Canada's founding peoples.⁶⁷ Ukrainians also believed that "within the linguistic provisions of the BNA Act, English should be the *lingua franca* of all Canadians, but the teaching of, and in, ancestral languages, and their social use, should be encouraged and supported from public funds wherever there is effective demand for them."⁶⁸ This view was unacceptable to the Fransaskois and francophones everywhere in Canada, who firmly believed that French ought to be the country's *lingua franca* as much as English. The Ukrainian stance on language is important for understanding how, by the 1970s, Ukrainians exerted influence on western Canadian provincial governments in developing their own cultural policies. Non-francophone minority group opposition to bilingualism helped provincial governments looking to contest the federal government's definition of the nation and limit the extension of bilingualism into provincial spheres of power.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Bohdan Bociurkiw explains that Ukrainian activism was "rooted undoubtedly in their historical aversion to assimilation, as well as in political causes underlying much of Ukrainian emigration from the old country, a strong sense of collective responsibility for the preservation of the group's ethnocultural values in Canada while these values were being suppressed by the alien rulers of Ukraine, the lasting commitment of Ukrainian churches to the preservation of the national cultural-linguistic heritage, the group's highly developed capacity for grassroots organization, and the nature of Ukrainian settlement in the Prairie province." Bociurkiw, "The Federal Policy of Multiculturalism and the Ukrainian-Canadian Community," 100-101.

⁶⁷ "Ukrainian Canadian Committee Pamphlet, Seminar '73," [PAS], ACFC Fonds. See also, for example, Ukrainian Canadian Committee, *Building the Future: Ukrainian Canadians in the 21st Century. A Blueprint for Action* (Edmonton, 1986), 2-7.

⁶⁸ Bociurkiw, "The Federal Policy of Multiculturalism and the Ukrainian-Canadian Community," 102-103.

⁶⁹ Paradoxically, the Ukrainians admired French-Canadian political activism and even proposed to adopt some strategies used by francophone minorities. One Ukrainian Canadian author argued that *The Heirs of Lord Durham* was "an excellent model for examining where the community is at present and where it wants to go." Vasyl Balan, "Cultural Vision and the Fulfilment of Visible Symbols," in Manoly Lupul (ed.), *Visible Symbols: Cultural Expression Among Canada's Ukrainians* (Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1984), 189.

One way of measuring the influence of various minority groups in influencing multiculturalism policy in western Canada is to examine their role in the founding debates on these policies. Manitoba's Mosaic Congress in 1970, for example, featured 143 Ukrainian delegates who outnumbered the French/French Canadians (41), Anglo-Celts (28), Germans (17), Jews (16), Poles (14), Italians (9), and Scandinavians (9) combined.⁷⁰ In Saskatchewan's Seminar '73, Ukrainians were also influential, with 32.8% of participants claiming Ukrainian background. Delegates listed as "French" or "French Canadian" were a mere 5.5%.

Table 4.1: Selected Participants in Seminar '73⁷¹

| Nationality/Ethnic Group | Number of Participants | % Of Participants |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Ukrainian | 132 | 32.8 |
| Not given | 60 | 14.9 |
| Irish | 24 | 6 |
| French/French Canadian | 22 | 5.5 |
| German | 21 | 5.2 |
| British/Anglo-Saxon/English Canadian | 18 | 4.5 |
| Polish | 16 | 4 |
| Spanish/Hispanic | 12 | 3 |
| East Indian | 10 | 2.5 |
| Romanian | 8 | 2 |
| Doukhobor | 7 | 1.7 |
| Russian | 7 | 1.7 |
| Scandinavian | 6 | 1.5 |
| UNESCO Representatives | 6 | 1.5 |
| Hungarian | 5 | 1.2 |

Ottawa's bilingualism policies were roundly criticized during Seminar '73 by the Ukrainians. During the plenary session, the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians of Saskatchewan argued that a cultural policy based on the idea of a bilingual Canada would be inappropriate because it excluded other minority groups in Saskatchewan. Any government support for

⁷⁰ Lupul, *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, 128.

⁷¹ Taken from "Participants," in Saskatchewan, *Report on proceedings of seminar '73*, 79-87. Percentage of participants lower than 1% not given.

multiculturalism, the group insisted, "will have to be based on a policy that is firmly non-exclusionist and non-discriminatory with respect to the diverse organizations within 'the other ethnic groups'."⁷²

The government also articulated its own vision of Saskatchewan and multiculturalism at the conference, based on its strategy of contesting biculturalism. During the keynote address, Premier Blakeney reiterated his government's view that biculturalism did not accurately describe Saskatchewan because people of French and English origin did not constitute a majority in the province.⁷³ Minister of Education Gordon MacMurchy, an NDP organizer and former school trustee who acted as Blakeney's point man on rural Saskatchewan on difficult political issues, was even more critical of biculturalism in his own speech:

...Canada is not a bicultural nation, not a bilingual nation, but one with several languages and many cultural traditions. This recognition is vital in Saskatchewan when we probably have more diversity and more operational cultural traditions than any other province. It has only recently been recognized by the opinion leaders and the media that Canada is not a melting pot but a mosaic. For many years we held the common American view that ethnic immigrants would eventually mix into our country and disappear as groups. Fortunately this illusion is no longer accepted or expected. It would be a tragedy if this province lost its ethnic colour and diversity, by accident or by design.⁷⁴

In other words, according to the government, multiculturalism set Saskatchewan apart from the rest of Canada. To impose two languages or cultures on the province was akin to exclusion -- worse, an exclusion that was un-Canadian and akin to the American melting pot.⁷⁵ It would be a bilingual melting pot, but a plan for assimilation all the same. Manitoba's Mosaic Congress

⁷² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷³ "The first fact is this: Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada whose inhabitants, in the majority, trace their origins to non-British and non-French sources...We are a prime example of cultural diversity." *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁵ This view of multiculturalism was also widespread amongst opponents of biculturalism such as Ukrainian Professor Manoly Lupul, who saw the latter as "two melting pots for one where other minority groups are concerned." Lupul, *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, 120. For Lupul, biculturalism was a hegemonic idea based on a false interpretation of Canada's historical and social realities. It was, therefore, legitimately resisted by many ethnic groups, including the Ukrainians. See "Resisting Cultural Dualism" in *Ibid.*, 103-111.

featured similar criticisms of bilingualism as delegates worked towards a cultural policy more suited to how they understood western Canada. When a Ukrainian-sponsored resolution calling for Manitoba to "study ways and means of preserving the multi-lingual and multi-cultural reality of the Manitoba Mosaic" was adopted, over 25 Franco-Manitoban delegates left the hearings in protest. Recalling the event in his memoirs, Ukrainian Professor of Education and prominent community leader Manoly Lupul called it "...the first sign that French-Canadian linguistic aspirations in the west would either have to be trimmed or take the aspirations of other ethnocultural groups into account."⁷⁶ Saskatchewan's Seminar '73 did not feature any similar outbursts, although tensions ran high between the francophones and other minority groups.

MacMurchy declared in his speech that Saskatchewan would do the right thing and move beyond Ottawa's bilingualism by being more generous towards the province's minorities, widening language education beyond French and English. He went as far as to question the appropriateness of French language education in Saskatchewan when considering other minority groups such as the Germans and Ukrainians:

An amendment passed in 1968 allows the department to designate schools in which French may be the language of instruction. However, no provision exists for other languages to be used, despite the fact that we have German and Ukrainian groups in Saskatchewan larger than the French. To remedy this, we are proposing to amend the School Act at the next session to allow teaching in other languages.⁷⁷

The comments struck a positive chord for participants. In the final minutes of the seminar, support for languages other than French or English in education and public media were listed among the most popular recommendations. The seminar also suggested "that the provincial government make a written declaration that Saskatchewan is a multicultural province" and that

⁷⁶ Lupul, *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, 127.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

federal government "should define and constitutionally guarantee the maintenance of languages and cultures representative of all Canadian ethnic groups."⁷⁸

The government viewed Seminar '73 as a success and used it to counter the federal government's seemingly top-down, bureaucratic imposition of bilingualism. As Ed Tchorzewski explained, multiculturalism policy in Saskatchewan was founded by "the concerned man on the street...as an equal to the planning arm of a Government Department."⁷⁹ In the Legislature, he noted that "Multiculturalism in Saskatchewan is a concept that embraces the entire population. Indian and Métis, English and French, along with many other cultural groups, are well parts of the Saskatchewan Mosaic."⁸⁰ The common thread running through government discussions and policy papers, however, was that Saskatchewan had to find a way to define itself that was not bicultural.

Multiculturalism in Practice: Applying Policy, 1974-1976

If Seminar '73 was a success as the government believed, it did not lead to a philosophically coherent policy. Saskatchewan's multicultural policy, in its early years, tended to be contradictory and was the result of difficulties in articulating a new history and identity for the province. What was clear, however, was Saskatchewan's intention to leave behind its troubled history of conflict over language and culture. When Ed Tchorzewski introduced the *Act Establishing the Saskatchewan Multicultural Act*⁸¹ in the Legislature for second reading, he made no mention of Saskatchewan's troubled history with minority groups, especially the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁹ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 4th Session, 17th Legislature, vol. 14, 309 (10 December 1973).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Act Establishing the Saskatchewan Multicultural Advisory Council and Providing Assistance to Individuals and Groups*, 1973-47, c. 101 (Saskatchewan).

francophones. Objections to multiculturalism in the province, he argued, were likely the result of "racial and cultural prejudice...based on ignorance."⁸² The new multicultural act, Tchorzewski continued, affirmed that "linguistic and cultural diversity is not only an inescapable reality in our province and this country, but that it is a desirable situation which must be maintained and nurtured."⁸³ In making multiculturalism law Saskatchewan would build on its "multicultural" past while at the same time creating a new societal future:

...we are talking of a concept of building a new land, a new culture, and a new loyalty -- not by displacing the old, but on the firm foundations of older cultural roots -- tended, nourished and adapted over a space of generations...a matter of strengthening and building the very foundations of a new society and hopefully a better society here in Canada...Ours must be a province where people of every cultural background have full access to their own ethnocultural heritage...Such a society will not only guarantee that all our residents, wherever they came from, have a sense of full participation in the affairs of this province, but may also provide an attractive climate for new Canadians who we hope will join us in the decades ahead.⁸⁴

In a way, Tchorzewski recognized that Saskatchewan was engaged in reconstructing its political community -- that it was embarking on a new cultural project based on an ideal of multiculturalism rather than bilingualism or British-Canadian nationalism. At the same time, his speech confirmed the government position that the province's history was multicultural rather than weighted down by different, and perhaps less palatable, political ideas. Remnants of the earlier, assimilationist ideal can be observed, however, in caveats that the government placed on diversity. Tchorzewski gave few details as to how linguistic diversity would be developed, nor did he explain how Saskatchewan would work with the federal government to promote francophone culture. Indeed, as he maintained in his speech, diversity had limits. It would have to be balanced with the overall socio-political unity of the province:

⁸² Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 4th Session, 17th Legislature, vol. 14, 4 (18 April 1974).

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2486.

...the welfare of the individual and the ethno-cultural group is not the paramount issue, but rather it is the unity and wellbeing of the whole society that is of major importance where there is cultural diversity. Cultural communities are necessary because they are rewarding to individuals in such groups, but they must not become cultural prisons which cut off individuals and groups aspirations in other spheres...We want diversity. We want unity, Mr. Speaker.⁸⁵

The Act itself reflected the government's understanding of Saskatchewan history.

"Multiculturalism"

means the preservation and development of the multicultural composition of the province and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes the recognition of the right of every community, whose common history spans many generations, to retain its distinctive group identity, and to develop its relevant language and its traditional arts and sciences, without political or social impediment and for the mutual benefit of all citizens.⁸⁶

Francophones viewed this vision for cultural policy as problematic since it did not suppose any real reforms in the way power relations were structured in society between French and English speakers. Before the bill was enacted by the legislature, ACFC Vice President Paul Arès wrote to Deputy Minister of Culture and Youth, Frank Bogdasavich, that although the principles of government support for culture were valid, the legislation neglected to "underline the great contribution of the two founding nations since the very beginning of colonisation of this area in the 18th century."⁸⁷ Arès believed that while multiculturalism was a laudable goal for any government, it should not gloss over the "bilingual character of the pioneers from the very beginnings of our history."⁸⁸ Therefore, the ACFC suggested, recognition of French and English as official languages in Saskatchewan, as well as "the greater Indian and Métis contribution," should accompany any official multiculturalism policy.⁸⁹ ACFC President Albert O. Dubé also

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2484-2485.

⁸⁶ *Act Establishing the Saskatchewan Multicultural Advisory Council and providing for Assistance to Individuals and Groups*, 1973-74, c. 101 (Saskatchewan).

⁸⁷ Paul Arès to F.J. Bogdasavich, 5 February 1974. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

wrote to Bogdasavich complaining about the historical perspective taken by the government in multiculturalism. The government, Dubé wrote, "seems to forget that the recognition of multiculturalism in Canada should be within the context of a bilingual country."⁹⁰ For the Fransaskois, protecting and fostering the culture of various minority groups was certainly beneficial but it would not overturn the predominantly English-speaking reality of Saskatchewan culture. More fundamental changes in government-minority relations were required.

Now that multiculturalism enjoyed legislative status, the Department of Culture and Youth set out to apply various policies and establish government support for provincial cultural activities. The government provided for language maintenance and support for minority groups through two programs: the "Summer Language Camp Program" and the "Language Opportunities Program." Language camps would "help Saskatchewan citizens better understand their own cultural backgrounds through the medium of language" in an intensive immersion setting over several days or weeks, while Language Opportunities would "assist cultural groups to provide language instruction otherwise unobtainable through regular educational channels."⁹¹ Funding for both programs was provided to any existing "ethno-cultural organization" that filled out a short application and followed the department's guidelines.

⁹⁰ Albert O. Dubé to Frank Bogdasavich, 13 February 1974. [PAS], ACFC Fonds

⁹¹ Saskatchewan, "Summer Language Camp Program: Objectives" and "Language Opportunities Program: Objectives," Allan Blakeney Fonds.

Table 4.2: Summer Language Camps Funding, 1975-1976⁹²

| Year | Language | Amount (\$) | % of total funding |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1975 | Ukrainian | 10,400 | 70 |
| 1975 | French | 700 | 5 |
| 1975 | Roumanian | 750 | 5 |
| 1975 | Polish | 3,000 | 20 |
| 1976 | Ukrainian | 8,750 | 68 |
| 1976 | French | 2,676 | 21 |
| 1976 | Polish | 600 | 5 |
| 1976 | Roumanian | 800 | 6 |

Ukrainians, Francophones, Roumanians, and Poles were the principal recipients of Summer Language Camps funding. That they were able to immediately capitalize on new government programming in the sphere of culture is consistent with their high levels of organization and political motivation. All four already had representative community organizations that could quickly take advantage of funding. The predominance of these groups is consistent with Ed Tchorzewski's observation that most grants went to organizations that were prominent and, more often than not, located in the province's two largest cities.⁹³ That the Ukrainians benefited most was consistent with their demographic strength and their favourable views of provincial government policy supporting multiculturalism.

The Language Opportunities Program followed a similar pattern of Ukrainian preponderance in funding allocations, taking in over one-third of the department's overall funding for language opportunities during the 1974-1975 fiscal year.

⁹² Taken from Saskatchewan, "Cultural Activities Division: Six Month Report," September 1975 and "Cultural Activities Division: Six Month Report," September 1976. [PAS], Ed Tchorzewski Fonds.

⁹³ Ed Tchorzewski to Premier and All Cabinet Ministers, 31 October 1974. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

Table 4.3: Language Opportunities Program Funding, 1974-1975⁹⁴

| Language | Number of Classes | Amount (\$) | % of total funding |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Ukrainian | 12 | 2,250 | 39 |
| Polish | 3 | 500 | 9 |
| Hindi | 2 | 250 | 4 |
| Polish | 2 | 500 | 9 |
| Greek | 2 | 500 | 9 |
| Italian | 1 | 250 | 4 |
| Roumanian | 2 | 500 | 9 |
| German | 1 | 250 | 4 |
| Spanish | 1 | 500 | 9 |
| Hungarian | 1 | 250 | 4 |

The Fransaskois did not receive any funding until the following year when they were given 7% of the overall provincial funding (with 52% going to the Ukrainian community).⁹⁵

The francophone community was not treated as special or more important than any other minority group. On the contrary, the Fransaskois found themselves near the bottom in terms of overall funding for multicultural language programs. It is significant, however, that the Fransaskois took time to apply for funding and take advantage of such programming, especially given that they could find other avenues to fund French-language initiatives. The Fransaskois did not boycott multiculturalism policies or programs despite their reservations, opting instead to take advantage of them wherever they could. It is possible that the community hesitated to exploit multicultural programming to its fullest extent for political reasons, which is why they received less funding than other groups. In any case, Fransaskois use of multicultural policy shows that, to the community, it was possible that multiculturalism could coexist with biculturalism.

⁹⁴ Taken from Saskatchewan, "Cultural Activities Division: Six Month Report," September 1975. [PAS], Ed Tchorzewski Fonds.

⁹⁵ Saskatchewan, Department of Culture and Youth, *Annual Report, 1976-1977*.

Although the government had an idea of what it meant when it referred to Saskatchewan as a "multicultural society," multiculturalism policy was not always coherently applied. Until the *Report of the Cultural Policy Secretariat* (Vichert Report) was published in 1980, for example, Saskatchewan did not have a well-defined policy for who should receive funding from the government or why -- even if the province was determined to define itself as multicultural, not bicultural. "Cultural Activities" funding from 1974 to 1976, for example, was given not only to Greek, Chinese, First Nations, and francophone organizations, but also to youth hostels, recreation and parks associations, debate clubs, church restoration groups, and filmmaking clubs.⁹⁶

Multiculturalism Meets National Unity, 1976-1977

"If Saskatchewan had a hundred problems," Premier Ross Thatcher declared in 1967, "the constitution would be the hundred and first."⁹⁷ Almost ten years later when René Lévesque's Parti Québécois was elected in November 1976, the West's attitude towards the constitution had changed considerably. The West wanted reforms on resource revenue sharing and control; Quebec wanted constitutional reform. It was the latter question, particularly the tone adopted by Lévesque's sovereignty-oriented government, that reignited national debate over all matters constitutional.⁹⁸

Allan Blakeney welcomed discussions on the constitution, but was not enthusiastic about the French-language side of the growing constitutional debate. Pierre Trudeau's almost singular preoccupation with Quebec and language rights in constitutional debates posed major difficulties

⁹⁶ Saskatchewan, Department of Culture and Youth, *Annual Report, 1974-1975; Annual Report, 1975-1976; Annual Report, 1976-1977*.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 95.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

for the western Canadian provinces who saw themselves as multicultural. It threatened to upset the balance that Blakeney had found between multiculturalism and bilingualism -- political acceptability at the provincial/regional level on the one hand, and suitability to the national unity debate on the other. In Saskatchewan, multiculturalism was a popular policy and any sort of special treatment of the Fransaskois could have political costs for Blakeney and his party.⁹⁹ Multiculturalism, therefore, gave Saskatchewan the opportunity to unambiguously assert its identity during national unity and constitutional discussions between 1976 and 1982.¹⁰⁰

Why is it important to understand Allan Blakeney and the Saskatchewan NDPs position on national unity? How does it pertain to the political community of Saskatchewan and the French-language question in the province? Blakeney was well-respected on national unity, not only in Saskatchewan but across Canada. During national unity debates, he emerged as one of the leading voices of English Canada. Secondly, constitutional politics are major battlegrounds for political communities and cultural meanings of nations. Both amending a constitution and fostering national unity require consensus. Amending a constitution also places different regional identities in conflict with one another.¹⁰¹ By examining the various statements and political processes surrounding national unity and the constitution, a better understanding of Saskatchewan political identity can be gained.

As patriation of the Canadian constitution took centre stage in national politics, Blakeney's government continually reinforced the multicultural definition of Saskatchewan to the provincial and national public in addition to using multiculturalism as the major limiting

⁹⁹ In 1977, for example, knowledge of federal multiculturalism policies was highest in Canada among prairie residents; westerners were also the least likely to see multiculturalism as an attempt to assimilate cultural minorities. Canada, *Multiculturalism and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada* (Ottawa, Minister of State for Multiculturalism, 1977), 149.

¹⁰⁰ As Roy Romanow, John Whyte, and Howard Leeson note, the national unity/constitutional issue was prominent during the later 1970s as little substantial discussion was held between the rejection of the Victoria Charter in 1971 and the Edmonton Conference (which revitalized constitutional talks) in 1976. *Canada...Notwithstanding*, 1-2.

¹⁰¹ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 75.

factor on provincial bilingualism. According to Blakeney, any discussion on protecting French language rights and culture had to account for the province's multicultural identity. Before the 17th Annual Premiers' Conference in Banff in August 1976 (the "Edmonton Conference"), for example, the Department of the Attorney General wrote that

In discussion with federal officials last August, Premier Blakeney indicated that it must be appreciated that in Saskatchewan matters related to recognition of official cultures (as distinguished from official languages) were ones of great sensitivity in the context of bi-culturalism as opposed to multi-culturalism. We indicated that it would be necessary to give very careful consideration to the form of any proposed constitutional guarantees relating to cultural matters...¹⁰²

At the conference Blakeney hinted at the difficulties Saskatchewan faced in applying Ottawa's official language policies, especially in education. Other provinces joined in and expressed their own wishes for more provincial powers in cultural policy.¹⁰³ There was a "high degree of consensus" that provincial governments had "important responsibilities" with regards to cultural policy, communications, and immigration, and "a number of them indicated that such a provision would enable them to encourage the multicultural aspect of their population."¹⁰⁴

The stakes were high as western Canadians grew increasingly restive over the economy and constitution. The Saskatchewan NDP stood to lose support from voters fed up with Ottawa's language policies if Blakeney was too closely aligned to Trudeau on bilingualism.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, Blakeney had to cooperate on the constitution and national unity. But by early 1977 regional discontent with Ottawa was serious and could no longer be ignored. Part of western

¹⁰² Department of Attorney General to A.E. Blakeney and Roy J. Romanow, 10 August 1976. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁰³ *Report on Constitutional Discussions for the 17th Annual Premiers' Conference, August 18-21, 1976.* [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* See also Romanow, Whyte, and Leeson, *Canada...Notwithstanding*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ The regional decline of the Liberal party on the Prairies can be directly associated to cultural matters, particularly Ottawa's official bilingualism policies. See Smith, *The Regional Decline of a National Party*, xvii, 118-120, 129-130; see also Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 95-96.

dissatisfaction with the federal government was directly related to cultural matters.¹⁰⁶ While Blakeney usually could not pass up an opportunity to criticize Prime Minister Trudeau and defend Saskatchewan's interests -- especially in matters of resource ownership and cultural autonomy¹⁰⁷ -- it was Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative leader Dick Collver who picked up the western alienation cause in Saskatchewan. Collver, an energetic businessman who almost single-handedly rebuilt the provincial Progressive Conservative party during the 1970s, regularly lambasted Trudeau and Ottawa on economic and cultural issues in the legislature. In April 1977 he proposed a resolution in the Legislature that "condemns the Liberal Government in Ottawa for its centralist policies which are encroaching on provincial jurisdictions, against the spirit of Confederation; which fail to recognize in a meaningful way, the regional, cultural, and economic differences in Canada...."¹⁰⁸ Blakeney and the NDP worried that Collver's attacks on Trudeau and official bilingualism would bleed support away from the party in favour of the surging Conservatives.¹⁰⁹

Despite these challenges and the rising threat of western regional discontent, Blakeney continued to try and strike a balance between provincial identity and national necessity. In July 1977, the Saskatchewan civil service drafted a number of proposals to improve provincial French-language rights in Saskatchewan which would in turn increase Saskatchewan's contributions to national unity. Wes Bolstad, a senior civil servant in the Blakeney's government

¹⁰⁶ See for example Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 446-453; Roger Gibbins and Sonia Arrison, *Western Visions: Perspectives on the West in Canada* (Peterborough, Broadview Press, 1995), 34-41; Gibbins, "Political Discontent in the Prairie West," in Francis and Palmer, *The Prairie West*, 681-696; Smith, *The Regional Decline of a National Party*, 145-150; Eager, *Saskatchewan Politics and Government*, 184-192.

¹⁰⁷ Blakeney actually had an enormous amount of respect for Trudeau and found him to be quite likeable as a person, even if their political relationship was not always easy. Gruending, *Promises to Keep*, 190.

¹⁰⁸ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 3rd Session, 18th Legislature, vol. 18, 2604 (26 April, 1977).

¹⁰⁹ Gruending, *Promises to Keep*, 172-177. The NDP noted the popularity of Collver's attacks on Trudeau's policies and used the strategy to their benefit in Saskatchewan's 1978 provincial election.

who had also worked with Tommy Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd, proposed general directions for policy.¹¹⁰ Bolstad wrote to Blakeney that

The question of cultural rights for French Canadians can be approached in two ways. One approach starts with the condition of the French Canadian as citizen of a province (say, Saskatchewan) and notices that the current situation in the country as a whole may represent his last opportunity to obtain a full statement of cultural rights. Assimilation is so weakening the sense of cultural community that if rights can't be obtained even under the threat of Quebec separation, then they never will be. From a Saskatchewan perspective alone, there are sufficient reasons in justice and decency that there should be no hesitation to act. If that is not enough, however...there is the national implication of provincial cultural policy...corrective action in the Provinces will be noticed and will have some effect. Apart from providing long-sought justice, cultural rights for French Canadians would provide a necessary ingredient for that broader 'sense of country' that is a *sine qua non* of Confederation.¹¹¹

Bolstad counselled Blakeney to consider expanding French-language rights in Saskatchewan not only to further the national unity cause, but also because a more expansive provincial bilingualism policy would open the door to cultural rights for other minority groups in Saskatchewan.¹¹² It could involve French-English court and government services, francophone schools, cultural supports, and a special advisory unit to the Premier. Sooner or later, Bolstad warned, the French-language rights issue would come to a head in Saskatchewan and the province ought to take a proactive position rather than wait for the federal government to impose policies.¹¹³ Given that the provincial government was in the midst of creating a new cultural and political identity for itself, however, it is difficult to see how an expansive French-language rights stance within the province would have been politically possible, even from a national unity standpoint. The problem with Bolstad's brief was that it did not consider how the multicultural

¹¹⁰ Bolstad, recruited by Blakeney in 1971 while he was working as Dean of the Faculty of Administration at the University of Saskatchewan's Regina campus, played a central role in the administrative development of Blakeney's government. *Ibid.*, 88-89.

¹¹¹ Wes Bolstad to Allan Blakeney, 23 July 1977. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

interpretation of Saskatchewan history could be reconciled with the federal government's push for bilingualism -- especially since the former was developed explicitly in opposition to the latter. Saskatchewan felt so strongly that its multiculturalism policy was the right thing to do that Ed Tchorzewski put out a press release arguing that "The development of the multicultural mosaic in the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan is a model that should be used by Ottawa in making it possible for all the provinces to meet their cultural needs."¹¹⁴ National unity could only go so far in convincing western Canadians that the francophone minorities in the region deserved special rights that other minority groups were not entitled to.

The Fransaskois Fight Back: Contesting Multiculturalism with National Unity, 1977-1979

The limiting effects of multiculturalism on provincial bilingualism policy is also evident in how the Saskatchewan government dealt with the ACFC between 1976 and 1982. Multiculturalism gave the government a firm fallback position on any particular Fransaskois demands for language rights and recognition. When *Les Héritiers de Lord Durham* was published by the Fédération des Francophones hors Québec in 1977, Ed Tchorzewski informed the ACFC that the government would consider taking action to help the Fransaskois community. Tchorzewski added, however, while Saskatchewan understood its obligations towards the Fransaskois in the context of national unity, the government also had a responsibility "to the many other linguistic groups in the Saskatchewan multicultural context."¹¹⁵ As long as French-language rights in Saskatchewan were viewed solely through the prism of national unity, there were few possibilities for provincial bilingualism since Saskatchewan had already embarked on a

¹¹⁴ Saskatchewan, Department of Culture and Youth, "Press Release: Ottawa Should Follow Lead of Prairie in Cultural Model," 16 March 1977.

¹¹⁵ Ed Tchorzewski to Donald Cyr, 7 June 1977. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

cultural policy that ran counter to the pan-Canadian bilingual ideal espoused by the federal government and the Fransaskois.

Yet, paradoxically, the national unity question had the effect of raising the Fransaskois community's profile in Saskatchewan politics. The spectre of Quebec separatism gave the Fransaskois and the ACFC the chance to advance their own view of Saskatchewan history and cultural policy. In 1977, for example, the ACFC published its organizational history to celebrate its 65th anniversary. Somewhat ironically the project was funded by grants for cultural history paid out by the Department of Culture and Youth.¹¹⁶ ACFC President Irène Chabot sent a copy of the aptly titled *Sixty-Five Years of Struggle* to Allan Blakeney, explaining to him that it was the true rendition of "les fondements historiques et politiques des droits du français en Saskatchewan."¹¹⁷ Chabot argued the Fransaskois deserved special attention above other ethnic groups because of the urgency of national unity and survival: "si le groupe, et la culture francophones devaient disparaître d'une seule province canadienne, tout comme le groups anglophone du Quebec, c'en serait fait de l'Unité nationale du Canada, et tout le monde s'en rend parfaitement compte, actuellement, au pays."¹¹⁸

The national unity question also forced Saskatchewan to re-evaluate its position on French-language education in the province. In July 1977 Premier Lévesque proposed "reciprocal education agreements" which would allow citizens from outside of Quebec to access English-language education if the other premiers guaranteed French-language education to any Quebecer.¹¹⁹ Blakeney immediately called a meeting with cabinet to discuss the province's

¹¹⁶ Ned Shillington to Donald Cyr, 22 September 1977. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

¹¹⁷ Irène Chabot to Allan Blakeney, 3 janvier 1978. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Sylvia Stead, "Quebec offers one-to-one language rights trade," *Globe and Mail*, 2 August 1977. For a more detailed discussion of the agreements, see Matthew Heyday, *Bilingual Today, United Tomorrow: Official Languages in Education and Canadian Federalism* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 101-103.

position on minority language education. His main goal was to have a unified public message and reassure cabinet that Saskatchewan was doing all it could for French language rights, given that it was historically and culturally different from Quebec and central Canada. Blakeney noted that "we have come a long way, since 1971, to providing education in either official language in Saskatchewan."¹²⁰ Furthermore, Saskatchewan would not base French-language educational rights on ethnicity or cultural origin: "we support the principle that Canadians, regardless of background and ethnic origin, should be able to choose their education in either of the official languages, wherever practical."¹²¹ As chapter three of this dissertation demonstrates, this principle ran counter to the Fransaskois desire for homogenous, francophone-only schools.

The distinction between francophone-only versus universal access to French language education is fundamental to understanding how the Saskatchewan provincial government viewed French-language rights in the province and in the context of national unity. Fransaskois demands for schools could be diffused by the government's argument that Saskatchewan had so many ethnic minority groups it could not possibly restrict official language education to one small group. Secondly, Blakeney could argue that Saskatchewan was going further than it needed to on French-language rights and national unity since everyone in the province could have access to French education, not just the Fransaskois.¹²² This approach reflected Saskatchewan's approach to cultural policy and rights more generally -- everyone was equal, and no one group could claim special rights over any others. If the Fransaskois could have access to French-language

¹²⁰ Allan Blakeney to Cabinet, 25 July 1977. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² As Allan Blakeney wrote to René Lévesque, "It seems to us that the concept of an official language carries with it the obligation of governments to make education in that language available to any resident requesting it, wherever their numbers make it reasonably feasible." Allan Blakeney to René Lévesque, 26 July 1977. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

education, then everyone else would as well. Conversely, if French-language education existed, education in other minority languages should be offered.

The government's philosophy and approach to bilingualism, national unity and the Saskatchewan multicultural identity was aptly summed up by Minister of Education Ed Tchorzewski, who wrote to Deputy Minister Ian Wilson after the cabinet meeting that

we should refrain from talking about bilingualism as there is a negative connotation connected with that word. I think it would be better to say, for example in the first sentence, something to the effect of 'in keeping with its strong commitment to the fact that Canada is a country of two official languages and to multiculturalism in the Saskatchewan context, etc. etc.'...I think we should not be saying that French is an official language in Saskatchewan. I do not believe it is wise for us to concede that it is an official language in Saskatchewan but rather to continue talking of it as being an official language of Canada. To speak of it as an official language of Saskatchewan I believe may lead to some difficult, if not impossible, demands such as having it made possible to be able to be tried in our Courts in either of the two languages, etc.¹²³

In Saskatchewan, national unity and official bilingualism clearly met their limits in multiculturalism. Multiculturalism was recognized explicitly as the limiting force on official bilingualism, which applied to the country as a whole but not to Saskatchewan in particular.

In spite of the government's stance on bilingualism, the Fransaskois continued to gain confidence that they could achieve their political goals. It helped that national politics was trending towards French-language rights issues. In the late 1970s the Fédération des francophones hors Québec (FFHQ) and francophone minorities across Canada stormed onto the political scene.¹²⁴ As French speakers, the Fransaskois came to be viewed as major players in the national unity debate. Suddenly, with the threat of separatism looming ever larger, they had the

¹²³ Ed Tchorzewski to Ian Wilson, 27 July 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹²⁴ Québec's *Le Devoir* was so impressed with the vitality and vigour of francophone minorities in politics that one of its editorials called 1977 "the year of francophone minorities." *Le Devoir*, "L'année des minorités francophones," 4 janvier 1978.

ear of the provincial government and major news media in Saskatchewan.¹²⁵ Blakeney's advisors also began to pay closer attention to the ACFC and Fransaskois media in order to avoid being caught off-guard by Fransaskois activism and French language-related issues.¹²⁶

The ACFC took advantage of its increased prominence by launching a number of high-profile campaigns and pressuring the government to provide more French-language services and education to the community. During the 18th Annual Premiers' Conference in August 1977, for example, the Fransaskois and FFHQ attacked Blakeney publicly by sending a "Scandal Dossier" on French-language schooling problems in Saskatchewan to national media on the eve of the conference.¹²⁷ Although Blakeney was outraged at the move, in private he admitted that the main reason any French language rights discussions were even occurring in Saskatchewan had little to do with multiculturalism or open-mindedness towards the francophones, but rather because national unity and politics of the moment required it.¹²⁸

In October 1977 Allan Blakeney noted in his brief to the Task Force on Canadian Unity that Saskatchewanians were tired of "the assumption by Ontario and Quebec that they constitute Canada" and of Ottawa "defending Canada entirely from a perspective of Central Canada."¹²⁹ Furthermore, Blakeney added,

many brave words have been spoken about the advantages of living in a country with two cultural traditions. Once again, that is a point of view which makes sense in Central Canada, but has much less meaning for Saskatchewan. The distance between Regina and Montreal is greater than the distance between Paris and Moscow. Very few residents of Saskatchewan have experienced francophone

¹²⁵ See for example "Language rights not guaranteed," *Leader Post*, 21 June 1977; "Language policy backed," *Leader Post*, 22 June 1977; James Roe, "French face tough task," *Leader Post*, 28 June 1977; Marcel Guay, "Step to linguistic justice," *Leader Post*, 9 November 1977; "French-Canadian association emphasizes national unity," *Leader Post*, 12 November 1977; Rupert Baudais, "Recognition of cultural, language rights stressed," *Star Phoenix*, 14 November 1977.

¹²⁶ Howard Leeson to Allan Blakeney, 18 October 1977. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹²⁷ See education chapter.

¹²⁸ Allan Blakeney to Cabinet, 7 October 1977. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹²⁹ Saskatchewan, *Canadian Unity. Brief presented to the Task force on Canadian Unity by Premier Allan Blakeney*, 20 October 1977.

culture at first hand. The French fact in Saskatchewan continues to be a matter of bilingual labels and a small community of francophones, smaller by far than the communities of German or Ukrainian speakers.¹³⁰

Blakeney underlined the widespread feeling among western Canadians that the cultural demands of Quebec and Ottawa's attempt to recast Canada as a bicultural nation were preventing people in the West from redressing "deeply-felt economic grievances." Resentment towards bilingualism in Saskatchewan was therefore not only cultural because it went against the way western Canadians saw themselves, but it was also economic because it consumed almost all of the federal government's efforts on constitutional reforms.¹³¹

To its credit, the Saskatchewan government was willing to consider extending limited French-language rights within the province in order to satisfy the federal government push for official languages. In return, Saskatchewan wanted more control over resource revenues and taxation.¹³² On the other hand, Blakeney was uneasy about constitutionalizing cultural rights. Such a move contradicted his general beliefs surrounding the Canadian political system. Blakeney believed that rights should be protected by Parliament and the legislatures, not by the courts.¹³³ He was hesitant about Pierre Trudeau's proposed charter of rights and was generally not in favour of entrenched rights even if he was willing to entertain the idea so that Saskatchewan could have more powers over its natural resources.¹³⁴ It made sense, then, that Blakeney favoured a broad provincial multiculturalism policy because in his view it would give the majority the flexibility it needed to negotiate and determine rights.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Eager, *Saskatchewan Government*, 188-189.

¹³² Roy Romanow, John Whyte, and Howard Leeson, *Canada...Notwithstanding*, 15-16.

¹³³ Blakeney was not alone in this belief. As Roy Romanow, John Whyte, and Howard Leeson explain, many premiers "favoured the retention of the traditional parliamentary process as the method to protect individual rights in the country." *Ibid.*, 13 and 218-220. Ross Thatcher's Liberal government took a similar stance on the entrenchment of rights during meetings leading up to the Victoria Charter. *Ibid.*, 229-230.

¹³⁴ Gruending, *Promises to Keep*, 194-196, and 209; Blakeney, *An Honourable Calling*, 176-177.

As the new legislative session opened up in November 1977, the speech from the Throne noted defiantly that "We are a multicultural society, yet we see Canada increasingly defined as a land of only two cultural traditions. Nevertheless, no one can question the loyalty of Saskatchewan people to the idea of Confederation. We are proud to be Canadians, and we want a Canada which commands the loyalty of all its citizens."¹³⁵ The opposition used the multiculturalism-bilingualism question to portray Blakeney as too close to Trudeau on cultural policy. As hesitant as Blakeney was towards official bilingualism in Saskatchewan, it was not enough for Dick Collver, who denounced the NDP for not resisting Ottawa's imposition of bilingualism on Saskatchewan. Collver, never one to hold back in the legislature, slammed Blakeney for not protecting Saskatchewan from Ottawa's policies which were preventing people from learning "the language of the province":

Mr. Speaker, in a multicultural society in Saskatchewan, in which the implementation of bilingualism has been rejected throughout the province of Saskatchewan it's being done by the present government in Ottawa. In our multilingual and multicultural province...we believe where people in other parts of the province of Saskatchewan, many of them first generation Canadians, who have difficulty acquiring the language of our province - and for them to be told that somehow the present implementation of the bilingual policy by Ottawa is going to be continued, this is unacceptable to them and unacceptable to the people of Saskatchewan.¹³⁶

Collver's speech is notable because it excluded linguistic diversity from the definition of multiculturalism. The view harkens back to the more Anglo-conformist vision of western Canada -- defended by men such as Clifford Sifton -- who held that while peoples from all over the

¹³⁵ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 4th Session, 18th Legislature, vol. 19, 1 (16 November 1977).

¹³⁶ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 4th Session, 18th Legislature, vol. 19, 287 (25 November 1977).

world could settle the region, it was imperative that diversity be managed and that English be the common language.¹³⁷

Ned Shillington stepped up to defend the government's approach to culture in Saskatchewan. He argued that Collver was wrong because the inclusion of some French-language rights and education in the province was consistent with Saskatchewan's overall approach to multiculturalism:

In this province, Mr. Speaker, we have attempted to encourage not a bilingualism, but a multiculturalism. We have tried to encourage not only the French, but including the French. We have also tried to include people of all backgrounds, Ukrainians, Germans, and the list is nearly endless, to take a pride in their culture and their language, and it succeeded. Multiculturalism is flourishing in this province as it never has before and we think this is a far more positive way to approach the problem than the pen of the narrow way, in many ways that the federal government has approached it.¹³⁸

Thus while cultural policy emanating from Ottawa was cast as a "threat" to Saskatchewan by both the Conservatives and the NDP, the parties took different approaches to what multiculturalism actually meant in terms of concrete language policies. By casting French-language rights as part of multiculturalism, the NDP could cooperate with Ottawa while trying to mitigate potential political fallout.

The line between fostering a provincial political identity and supporting Ottawa on national unity and language was a fine one, however, and one not easily walked because of a well-organized and aggressive Fransaskois community. In 1978 the ACFC increased its own pressure on the Saskatchewan government based on the Fransaskois' strong sense of community history, which dovetailed with the imperatives of national unity and the bicultural vision of

¹³⁷ See D.J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy 1896-1905," in Howard Palmer, *The Settlement of the West*, Calgary, Comprint Publishing Company, 1977, 60-85; Hall, "A Divergence of Principle: Clifford Sifton, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the North-West Autonomy Bills, 1905," *Laurentian University Review*, November 1974, 3-24.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 397.

Canada put forth by the federal government. The first ACFC press release of the year, entitled "French, Official Language in Saskatchewan," declared that "In 1905, the Saskatchewan and Alberta Constitutions emanating from that of the North-West Territories, in fact retained French as an official language with the same constitutional rights as the English language."¹³⁹ The ACFC warned the public that it could "demand a French translation of all debates in legislation since 1905."¹⁴⁰ In February the ACFC organized a letter-writing campaign to coincide with the First Ministers Conference in Montreal. Fransaskois community members and FFHQ members sent form letters to Blakeney which demanded that he establish a Bureau de la Minorité Officielle which would identify and solve problems for the Fransaskois. Given that Blakeney was about to discuss national unity, the letter argued, "nous estimons nécessaire que ces déclarations tiennent compte en premier lieu de votre communauté française en Saskatchewan."¹⁴¹ Also in February, the death of Saskatchewan Lieutenant governor George Porteous prompted ACFC President Irène Chabot to ask Blakeney for the appointment of a Fransaskois Lieutenant governor.¹⁴² Recalling that Amédée Forget was the province's only French-speaking Lieutenant governor (1905-1910), Chabot argued that "Le temps est mûr...de sensibiliser davantage la population multiculturelle de la Saskatchewan à l'importance du bilinguisme officiel dans notre pays."¹⁴³ It was not to be, however, as Cameron Irwin McIntosh was appointed to succeed Porteous.¹⁴⁴ Forget remains the only francophone Lieutenant governor in the history of Saskatchewan.

¹³⁹ ACFC, "News Release: French, Official Language in Saskatchewan," 3 January 1978. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ ACFC to Allan Blakeney, Form Letter. [PAS], Commission culturelle fransaskoise Fonds.

¹⁴² The request was somewhat fruitless, given that the Lieutenant governorship is a federal appointment.

¹⁴³ Irène Chabot to Allan Blakeney and Cabinet, 10 février 1978. [PAS], ACFC Fonds. It should be noted here, however, that the Lieutenant Governor is a federal appointment.

¹⁴⁴ See "McIntosh, C. Irwin," in Brett Quiring (ed.), *Saskatchewan Politicians*, 157-158.

In addition to public statements, the ACFC used behind-the-scenes pressure on the province. Irène Chabot asked to meet Allan Blakeney and the provincial cabinet "so that we may know your personal position and that of your party, with respect to those sections of the A.C.F.C. brochure which deal with the official status of French in our province."¹⁴⁵ Blakeney, who liked to consider many different facets of policy before acting, was concerned about how to respond to ACFC activism. Although the general direction of cultural policy in Saskatchewan was well elaborated by 1978, it was still a work in progress and the government did not yet have a clear, focused approach to the ACFC and the question of provincial bilingualism. Multiculturalism provided a useful tool for deflecting requests from Ottawa that Saskatchewan expand bilingualism; provincial pressure from the ACFC required a more careful and concrete strategy. Unsure of what to do next, Executive Council commissioned a poll of Saskatchewan residents to get their attitude about French-language education in the province. 37.4% of provincial residents answered "no" to allowing education in French, while 53.6% said "yes."¹⁴⁶ Rural areas were split almost 50-50 on the question, with 47.7% in favour of French education and 46.6% against.¹⁴⁷ For the NDP, already struggling in rural Saskatchewan over a number of contentious agricultural issues¹⁴⁸, French-language education was another hot-button issue that could be troublesome for the government.

In April, Premier Blakeney wrote a terse memo to cabinet asking that they "clear up our position re ACFC" in time for next month's meeting.¹⁴⁹ Executive Council research officer Howard Leeson briefed cabinet for the meeting. Leeson recommended that the government reject a number of ACFC proposals, notably equal status of French and English because "this is not

¹⁴⁵ Irène Chabot to Allan Blakeney, 3 January 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁴⁶ Russ Raton to Robert Weese, 4 January 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Gruending, *Promises to Keep*, 213-230.

¹⁴⁹ Allan Blakeney to All Cabinet Ministers, 21 April 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

practical in Saskatchewan."¹⁵⁰ The ACFC also wanted the government to fund an "Official Minority Office" which would be attached to cabinet or the premier; Leeson recommended rejecting that proposal as well. Generally, Leeson wrote, the government approach "should be to avoid a confrontation, and yet avoid the appearance of 'giving in' to the ACFC."¹⁵¹ It would be the middle road, a frustrating one for the Fransaskois community. The government would not overtly oppose the ACFC lest it be seen as undermining national unity initiatives; at the same time, it would resist the ACFC since it would not be popular or politically wise to be viewed by people in Saskatchewan as "giving in" to the Fransaskois.

Meanwhile the opposition Liberals used the multiculturalism-bilingualism issue to criticize Blakeney and the Department of Culture and Youth for "going up and down this country talking about national unity"¹⁵², yet not providing enough funding towards French language and culture outside of the educational system. Liberal MLA Ted Malone, a Regina lawyer, questioned the government's commitment to national unity:

For you to say, or for the Premier to say (and I see he has slithered out), for him to say that he is doing everything he can to foster better understanding in this province, is absolute nonsense, when that is the budget you have available to you...if that measly little amount of money you have is not just for French culture, it's for all of them and believe me, the Ukrainian people, the German people have just as legitimate claim toward funding as the French people so obviously that is not enough to go around.¹⁵³

Here again, the inclusive vision of multiculturalism came to the fore. Saskatchewan Liberals thought that the Fransaskois were equal with other minorities, but criticized the NDP for not doing enough for all minority groups under multiculturalism. The NDP was clearly in a

¹⁵⁰ Howard Leeson to Don Faris, 30 May 1978. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 5th Session, 18th Legislature, vol. 20, 2722 (11 May 1978).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2723.

dangerous position, getting criticism from both opposition parties for either doing too much or too little.

In 1978 there were few signs that Saskatchewan would change its direction on multiculturalism. The values and philosophy of multicultural policy were now well-enough established in the province that after 1979, annual reports of the Department of Culture and Youth ceased explaining why multicultural policy existed in Saskatchewan.¹⁵⁴ Allan Blakeney's public statements on national unity and the Saskatchewan identity also gave little evidence of a change in philosophical direction. In October 1978, for example, during discussions on constitutional reform, Blakeney continued to preach cautiousness on official bilingualism, especially in the context of western Canada's regional, multicultural identity.¹⁵⁵

Yet the myriad of economic and political issues facing Saskatchewan and Canada eventually prompted a more conciliatory tone from Blakeney's government after the NDP was re-elected in October 1978. Pressure from the federal government on language rights remained strong as the prime minister and premiers returned to constitutional discussions.¹⁵⁶ When the First Session of the new Legislature opened in February 1979, for example, the Speech from the Throne noted that constitutional discussions

...will require compromise on the part of all Canadians if we are to meet the aspirations of many different groups -- groups such as those who wish to ensure a fair return to their province from natural resources, those who wish to see the language rights of English and French-speaking Canadians protected in all parts

¹⁵⁴ Saskatchewan, Department of Culture and Youth, *Annual Report, 1979-1980*. Previous Department of Culture and Youth Annual Reports between 1972 and 1978 explained the government's overall philosophy behind multiculturalism.

¹⁵⁵ Saskatchewan, "Notes for Premier Allan Blakeney's Remarks. First Ministers' Conference, Ottawa." 30 October 1978.

¹⁵⁶ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 104; see also Matthew Hayday, *Bilingual Today, United Tomorrow: Official Languages in Education and Canadian Federalism* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 100-127.

of Canada within the context of a multicultural country, and those who wish to see a strong unified Canadian economy.¹⁵⁷

Accompanying this message was a general reconsideration of provincial cultural policy to be undertaken by the Cultural Policy Secretariat, established in June 1979.¹⁵⁸ The secretariat's mandate was to "produce a draft cultural policy for the government...which recognizes changing cultural influences and attempts to preserve and encourage all that is unique about our province."¹⁵⁹ Saskatchewan was approaching its seventy-fifth year in confederation and the government wanted to use the opportunity to evaluate how it represented itself within and without.¹⁶⁰

In June 1979 the ACFC also undertook a re-examination of its stance on multiculturalism. The organization published a key policy document that remained in force until 1986. Its juxtaposition with the Saskatchewan government vision of multiculturalism is striking and underlines the key role that the politics of memory played in the language question in Saskatchewan. Canada, the ACFC argued, is a country composed of two linguistic majorities as recognized in the *British North America Act* and the *Official Languages Act*; the recognition of French and English as official languages is also the recognition of those two official cultures.¹⁶¹ Its views on the worthiness of multiculturalism and other minority groups were blunt. The "third force," the ACFC argued, "est en fait un regroupement tout-à-fait hétérogène, et sans unité et sans valeurs culturelles spécifiques."¹⁶² Other minorities in Canada, the ACFC believed, did not have the same claim to rights as francophone minorities. Moreover, other minorities did not

¹⁵⁷ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 1st Session, 19th Legislature, vol. 21, 3 (22 February 1979).

¹⁵⁸ Saskatchewan, *Report of the Cultural Policy Secretariat*, September 1980.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶⁰ Saskatchewan, Department of Culture and Youth, "Press Release," no date. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁶¹ ACFC, "Politique de l'A.C.F.C. devant guider les Fransaskois dans leurs relations avec les autres groupes de la Saskatchewan," juin 1979. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

understand how multicultural policy was affecting the Fransaskois and how the English-speaking majority used multiculturalism to pare back francophone demands for linguistic and cultural equality. Other minority groups should support the French Canadians, the ACFC wrote, because multiculturalism was nothing more than assimilation policy masquerading as cultural diversity:

Profitant des générosités tardives, peut-être forcées, d'une majorité bien installée, ces groupes s'unissant pour former une troisième force, voulurent se prévaloir de cette attitude pour obtenir pleine reconnaissance. Du même souffle ils fournissent à la majorité l'argument qui lui permet d'entretenir et d'accélérer le processus d'assimilation des Francophones. Ce processus avalera, comme ça se fait depuis toujours, malgré les espoirs éphémères, ces différents groupes quels qu'ils soient.¹⁶³

As a result, "L'A.C.F.C. s'oppose donc à une mosaïque canadienne ou saskatchewanienne qui conduit à un 'melting pot' déguisé et qui mène à un folklore coloré mais sans racines."¹⁶⁴

Les Fransaskois, Saskatchewan, and the Referendum, 1979-1982

At the end of 1979, two events complicated the multiculturalism and French-language rights debates in Saskatchewan. In December the Supreme Court of Canada handed down its decision in *Attorney General of Manitoba v. Forest*, a case dealing with the constitutional status of Manitoba's language legislation.¹⁶⁵ The court ruled that the 1890 *Official Language Act* was unconstitutional, creating the possibility that Manitoba would have to translate all of its laws to French. Saskatchewan, concerned about the implications of *Forest* for its own provincial language regime, started examining whether or not it had similar constitutional obligations.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ ACFC, "Politique de l'A.C.F.C. devant guider les Fransaskois dans leurs relations avec les autres groupes de la Saskatchewan," juin 1979. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁶⁵ *Attorney General of Manitoba v. Forest*, [1979] 2 S.C.R. 1032.

¹⁶⁶ Saskatchewan, "Briefing Note: Legal Status of French in Saskatchewan," May 1980. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

Quebec separatism also increased the stakes for language politics in Saskatchewan and Canada in 1979. In November René Lévesque announced that a referendum on sovereignty-association was scheduled for May 1980. What happened next, however, shocked a number of provincial governments. The Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA), the Société franco-manitobaine (SFM), and the Société des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick (SANB) all announced support for the "Oui" vote. This support was limited -- most francophones outside of Quebec did not want to see la Belle province leave Canada -- but francophones in many provinces, including Saskatchewan, expressed sympathy for francophone Quebecers frustration and desire to have more power over cultural and linguistic protections for French.¹⁶⁷

On 14 February, the ACFC announced its own position of "non-interference" in the referendum: "L'A.C.F.C. reconnaît et respecte le droit des Québécois à décider pour eux-mêmes, sans contrainte, de leur avenir et de leurs relations avec leurs partenaires de la Confédération."¹⁶⁸ The ACFC urged the FFHQ, however, to support the "Oui" vote because "Un NON sera interprété par le Canada anglais comme l'expression de la satisfaction des Québécois face à la situation actuelle, c'est-à-dire au statut quo."¹⁶⁹ The ACFC believed that by supporting the Yes vote, the Saskatchewan government would understand that it was serious about its political demands and recognition of the two founding nations thesis.

The strategy worked. It certainly shocked the Saskatchewan government into taking action. In March, the ACFC met with Howard Leeson, now Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who admitted that the government was "surprised" at the ACFC position and that perhaps the government had not done enough to understand the Fransaskois

¹⁶⁷ Hayday, *Bilingual Today, United Tomorrow*, 138.

¹⁶⁸ ACFC, "Résolution du C.A. de l'A.C.F.C. concernant la position de la F.F.H.Q. face au référendum québécois." [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

position on separatism.¹⁷⁰ The government agreed to meet regularly with the ACFC before the vote in May, and "discuter des applications particulières à la Saskatchewan de la dualité canadienne et des éventuels principes constitutionnels qui la consacreront."¹⁷¹

Blakeney was upset with the ACFC position on the referendum. He told them that they were playing with fire by endorsing the "Oui" vote.¹⁷² Irène Chabot replied that the Fransaskois were presented with no other choice when the government continued to make positive statements on bilingualism and national unity while simultaneously mistreating the Fransaskois. Saskatchewan's cultural policy, Chabot argued, forced the ACFC's hand because it explicitly contested the historical recognition of French Canada:

...nous devons malheureusement constater qu'au niveau des déclarations publiques comme à ceux des discussions privées et des gestes concrets, il n'y a pas d'expression d'une volonté réelle de changement pour assurer enfin un statut égal aux deux peuples fondateurs de ce pays (sans oublier, bien sûr, la position primordiale des autochtones) et pour mettre en place des mécanismes qui permettront de corriger l'assimilation croissante du groupe canadien-français...Poussé par la pression des événements, vous semblez prêt à certaines ouvertures face au caractère particulier du groupe canadien-français au Québec et à la nécessité de lui reconnaître certains droits, mais les éléments francophones de votre province n'ont droit pour leur part qu'à l'indifférence la plus totale frisant parfois le mépris...Votre volonté de faire un compromis en faveur d'une 'dualité canadienne' théorique tout en évitant d'en reconnaître honnêtement la base en Saskatchewan est bien claire!¹⁷³

Chabot identified poor funding, the lack of bilingual services from the province, and universal French-language education access as problems that the community faced. The meagre offerings of French education in Saskatchewan, for example, were in "programmes destinés à

¹⁷⁰ "Procès verbal de la rencontre de l'A.C.F.C. et des fonctionnaires du Ministère des Affaires intergouvernementales," 26 mars 1980. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Allan Blakeney to Claire Doran, 14 March 1980. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

¹⁷³ Irène Chabot to Allan Blakeney, 15 avril 1980. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

l'enseignement d'une langue seconde aux anglophones. Inutile de souligner que les moyens sont totalement mésadaptés par rapport aux besoins des Fransaskois."¹⁷⁴

The referendum ended in defeat for Lévesque and les souverainistes. It was, as Canadian political scientist Peter H. Russell explains, a turning point in the national unity debate and Canadian federalism.¹⁷⁵ The same cannot be said, however, about Saskatchewan cultural policy and government-Fransaskois relations. After the referendum, both sides maintained their general stance on multiculturalism and bilingualism. Even with the close call of the referendum and Trudeau's pledge for change, in addition to Saskatchewan's openness, the government continued to project its multicultural identity on the national stage and use multiculturalism to draw the line on official bilingualism. In September, for example, Saskatchewan published a short booklet outlining its vision for the future of Canada. It reminded readers that Saskatchewan was the only Canadian province where people of British and French origin taken together formed less than half of the population. It also reiterated Saskatchewan's cooperation with Ottawa on official bilingualism, with reservations:

The federal government is urging us to reaffirm English and French as the official languages of Canada, and to guarantee in the constitution certain linguistic rights for French and English...Like other governments, and all political parties, we support the principle of official bilingualism at the national level. We agree that the federal government and its agencies should provide services in both French and English. And we believe, too, that those provinces which wish to be officially bilingual should -- where there are substantial numbers of the English or French minority -- have that opportunity. But Saskatchewan will insist that language provisions be practical and realistic. That they be tailored to recognize the diverse nature of Canada, from province to province. And that they respect the rights of Canada's ethnic groups as well as the original peoples.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 107.

¹⁷⁶ Saskatchewan, *The Future of Canada: A Saskatchewan Perspective*, September 1980.

The defeat of the separatists also prompted Blakeney and his government to clarify that French-English dualism was not the only priority for western Canadians. The language used by Blakeney in his official statement was revealing:

[The] constitution must ensure that French Canadians, and particularly French Quebecers, are free to be themselves in what is their country as it is ours. But the new constitution must also satisfy the real desire for change in other parts of Canada, including western Canada. I have said many times in the past that while the recognition of 'dualism' -- between French and English, or between Quebec and the rest of Canada -- is perhaps our most visible constitutional problem, it is not the only problem to be solved. We in the West have our own serious grievances which are well known by now, but still unresolved.

The Fransaskois community, for its part, worried about "post-referendum blues" and a decline in political influence now that the "Oui" vote had lost.¹⁷⁷ With more constitutional discussions slated for the near future, the organization presented yet another brief to the government, outlining its vision for bilingualism in Saskatchewan. The juxtaposition with the province's vision of Canada and Saskatchewan was striking:

It is clear to us that the Act of Confederation was, amongst other things, an alliance between two peoples or two societies and that the intent of the B.N.A. Act was to guarantee the rights and assure the equal development of the anglophone and francophone groups. It is fundamental that the new text of the constitution clearly and unequivocally recognize that there are two founding peoples, without prejudice whatsoever to the natives who were here before or to other groups who came after and who have contributed to the development of this country. We feel that our provincial government has the responsibility to make known this point of view and to defend it in the constitutional debate.¹⁷⁸

The meeting between the government and the community to discuss the briefing was tense. Romanow and Blakeney both insisted that full official bilingualism in Saskatchewan was not feasible because the Fransaskois community was too small. Moreover, "Mr. Blakeney noted that linguistic rights are not human rights. He said that the phrase 'where numbers warrant' is

¹⁷⁷ Pierre LeBlanc à Irène Chabot, 25 septembre 1980. Wilfrid Denis, Papers.

¹⁷⁸ ACFC, "Brief presented to the Members of the Cabinet of the Government of Saskatchewan," December 1980.

necessary because in practical terms he believes that's the way it will be and he does not want to promise more than he can deliver."¹⁷⁹

Indeed, Blakeney had other ideas about the cultural character of Saskatchewan and how it fit into the discussion on patriation. In his own brief to Parliament's Special Joint Committee on the Constitution, Blakeney remarked that he did not oppose the entrenchment of French and English language rights. This recognition, however, had to be reconciled with the Saskatchewan reality of multiculturalism:

Saskatchewan is the only province in which those of British and French origin, combined, form less than half the population. That makes us particularly conscious of our multicultural heritage. And it gives us a strong commitment to policies and programs that will ensure the continued vitality of languages and cultures other than French and English. We ought to be examining some constitutional recognition of multiculturalism, perhaps in a preamble as discussed last summer, or in some other section. But, in any case, it should be the subject of early discussion in the next round of negotiations.¹⁸⁰

But the idea of multiculturalism did not fit with how the Fransaskois viewed their own history, or the history of Saskatchewan and Canada: "Le multiculturalisme dans un cadre bilingue signifie dans les faits que chacun peut exprimer sa culture d'origine dans une des deux langues officielles, au choix. Donc, la grande mosaïque culturelle ne s'exprime qu'en anglais!"¹⁸¹

Furthermore, the ACFC argued, Blakeney and the Saskatchewan government based their ideas of multiculturalism on a "false conception" of western Canadian history:

Une autre des grandes lacunes du multiculturalisme tel qu'il est conçu actuellement au Canada, c'est qu'il s'appuie sur une conception fautive de l'histoire de ce pays. Il ignore les origines réelles du Canada et veut faire des Canadiens-français un groupe d'immigrants comme les autres. Or les Canadiens-français sont arrivés au pays dans des circonstances bien différentes, qui expliquent leur

¹⁷⁹ Saskatchewan, "Notes taken at a Meeting Between a Committee of Cabinet and the French Canadian Cultural Association of Saskatchewan," 17 December 1980. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

¹⁸⁰ Saskatchewan, *The Patriation and Amendment of the Constitution of Canada: Brief Presented to the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution by Honourable Allan Blakeney, Premier*. December 19, 1980.

¹⁸¹ ACFC. "La position de l'A.C.F.C. devant guider les Fransaskois dans leurs relations avec les groupes ethniques," 10 avril 1981. [PAS], CCF Fonds.

développement particulier, et encore aujourd'hui, leur situation particulière. Les français qui sont venue au pays n'étaient pas des immigrants qui changeaient de pays; ils venaient fonder un pays. Ils n'ont pas échangé leur culture en venant ici, comme le font des immigrants; ils ont développé une culture originale et francophone sur ce continent.¹⁸²

In the end, Blakeney, Romanow, and the Saskatchewan government agreed to entrench French and English language rights in the Constitution. The tensions between the government and the Fransaskois community, however, did not disappear. On the contrary, they were irreconcilable. The dualistic, bilingual national vision advanced by the federal government, and supported by the Fransaskois community, met its match in the provincial identity and cultural policy propounded by the Blakeney government.

Fransaskois and Saskatchewan government beliefs on multiculturalism, the Constitution, and national unity are aptly summed up in one of the last disputes between the ACFC and Blakeney's government before the 1982 provincial election. On 15 April, Irène Chabot wrote to Roy Romanow refusing an invitation to a multicultural gala and dinner marking the patriation of the Constitution. Why would the Fransaskois, who had so much to gain from the new *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, refuse to celebrate it with the province? According to Chabot,

il nous est difficile de se réjouir et de célébrer ce repatriement, lorsque ce projet constitutionnel n'a jamais reçu l'accord de la seule province francophone du pays, le Québec, qui, tout de même, représente un quart de la population canadienne. Pour l'A.C.F.C., ce fait nous est inacceptable, et nous porte à questionner la sincérité des leaders qui déclarent que ce projet reflète la dualité canadienne. Cette nouvelle constitution n'enchâsse pas les quelques concepts et droits que nous, à l'A.C.F.C., défendons depuis près de trois (3) ans maintenant, e.g.:

- i) la pleine reconnaissance des deux peuples officiels (le concept de dualité qui devrait être inscrit dans le préambule.
- ii) l'application de l'article 133 à tous les provinces et les territoires canadiens.
- iii) le droit aux groupes de langue minoritaire officielle de gérer et d'administrer leur propre système scolaire.
- iv) la reconnaissance de droits collectifs aux groupes de langue minoritaire officielle.¹⁸³

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Irène Chabot to Roy Romanow, 15 avril 1982. [PAS], ACFC Fonds.

Indeed, between 1971 and 1982, Saskatchewan redefined itself as multicultural in order to give itself an identity more suited to what was happening in Canada and western Canada at the time. The redefinition of the province and its history was fundamentally unacceptable to the Fransaskois community. For the provincial government, however, multiculturalism was an important historical narrative because it reflected the composition of the population. It also appealed to a population seeking an identity. Although financial support of multicultural programs was quite small, the overall ideas and narrative surrounding multiculturalism gave Saskatchewan a political, historical, and cultural identity at a time that regional consciousness was again on the rise.

Conclusion

Multiculturalism as a historical narrative and policy was elaborated explicitly in opposition to Ottawa's bilingualism narrative and policies. The narrative of multiculturalism spoke to the province's need for a reinvented memory. But, while history and memory can play key roles in constructing identity, they also constitute major sources of conflict. As the debate between the Saskatchewan government and the ACFC shows, fundamental differences in historical interpretations of western Canada led to different political goals and visions for the province between 1971 and 1982. The multicultural definition of Saskatchewan, while not anti-French, ran against the pan-Canadian nationalism espoused by Pierre Trudeau and the pan-Canadian French-English bilingualism so crucial to Trudeau's strategy of constitutional reform.

It should be noted that Saskatchewan's use of multiculturalism to blunt the effects of bilingualism and national unity is not synonymous with the racism and anti-French politics of the J.T.M. Anderson government and the earlier era of Saskatchewan politics. During the early era,

more extremist groups held a great deal of power of the political system, which was not the case for the 1968-1990 era. Moreover, policymakers and political leaders in the Blakeney government sincerely believed that multiculturalism policy was a true representation of the Saskatchewan identity. Thus, the purpose of multiculturalism policy went beyond its role in limiting official bilingualism in the province.

Understanding the founding ideas of multiculturalism in Saskatchewan is critical in recognizing how the province viewed official bilingualism and French-language rights within its own borders. Multiculturalism was not anti-French or anti-bilingualism in a bigoted or intolerant sense, but it did appeal to a population upset with Quebec's demands for cultural and political equality. Multiculturalism established an interpretation of western Canadian history that was antagonistic to the one espoused by Ottawa and the Fransaskois. For the Fransaskois, the recasting of Saskatchewan as multicultural denied their understanding of western Canadian history -- namely, the role played by French speakers in opening and establishing the West before the provinces were founded. On the other hand, the Fransaskois interpretation of history was unacceptable to many people in Saskatchewan because it did not correspond to how they viewed the province's history; it also dovetailed with pan-Canadian bilingualism and an Ottawa-centric vision of Canada which westerners found did not correspond with their understanding of their political community. Under the umbrella of multiculturalism, the Fransaskois were no different than any other minority group who had helped found Saskatchewan. No amount of demographic and political power imposed from Ottawa would make French an official language in the province.

On a policy level, these antagonistic interpretations of Saskatchewan history had considerable implications. The establishment of a multicultural narrative for Saskatchewan

history allowed the province to re-cast itself as open and diverse despite its troubled history on cultural diversity and the French language. The result was that although different cultures and diversity were explicitly endorsed as political values in Saskatchewan, the long-established value of unilingualism remained unchallenged. Secondly, it allowed Saskatchewan and western Canadian governments to counter the narrative and definition of Canada being advanced by the federal government. This function of multiculturalism policy was especially useful during national unity debates, when Saskatchewan needed to have firm reasons for resisting the expansion of official bilingualism in provincial institutions. Multiculturalism allowed the province to place limits on the extent to which French would be an official language in Saskatchewan which was especially useful at a time that regional economic and cultural discontent were on the rise. Finally, when the province could no longer resist expanding provincial bilingualism, especially in education, it used multiculturalism in order to justify bilingualism, arguing that French-language education and policy programmes were simply reinforcing the Saskatchewan identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

The "Moderate In-Between Position": The *Mercure* Case and Provincial Bilingualism, 1980-1988

Today I would rather recall some historical facts which our history books may have overlooked in the past...Too often, we forget that some of the first explorers and pioneers of our province, then known as the West, and later the North West Territories, were French-Canadians...the French-Canadians have been part of this province since the beginning and we are proud of what they did, of what they have willed to us and this is why we believe that we, their descendents, are equal partners in the province they helped build.¹

- Irène Chabot

And up until today, Mr. Speaker, or soon, this legislature has not spoken to the issues of how we as legislators will govern ourselves in this Assembly as it relates to the languages of English and French. And I ask, Mr. Speaker, why that is -- why that is. And I say, Mr. Speaker, and I think a fair reflection of history, is that when we became a province it was assumed by the members that sat in our places some 80-some years ago today, it was assumed that English was the language of Saskatchewan. That's not necessarily a reflection on them, I think history would record no other way than but that was the fact...The issue never came up here, Mr. Speaker, because it was assumed that the language of this province was English. And that assumption was passed on through subsequent members of this Assembly and became the tradition, the practice, of this province.²

- Bob Andrew, Minister of Justice

Introduction

The speeding ticket was an opportunity. When Father André Mercure was pulled over by the RCMP near Cochin, Saskatchewan in November 1980, he believed that it could be the Fransaskois community's chance to realize a bilingual Saskatchewan. Born in Quebec, Mercure moved to western Canada in 1942 and was ordained in Lebret, Saskatchewan in 1948. Throughout his career he understood how important official bilingualism was to the Fransaskois.³ With his speeding ticket, Mercure believed that it was time to launch a legal case to settle the question of bilingualism in Saskatchewan. He refused to pay the ticket and demanded that the province provide him with a French trial and translations of the relevant statutes. For Mercure and the Fransaskois, the time seemed ripe to raise the issue in the West: only a year

¹ Irène Chabot, "Allocution de la présidente de l'A.C.F.C. Madame Irène Chabot," 24 juin 1982. *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan [PAS]*, D. Grant Devine Fonds.

² Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 21st Legislature, vol. 31, 737 (21 April, 1988).

³ "It's not a question of me being a fanatic," Mercure noted, "It's a question of rights." See Earl Fowler, "Love of Canada motivates priest," *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 21 January 1981, A16.

earlier, Manitoba's francophones won a crucial victory when the Supreme Court of Canada declared that Manitoba's 1890 *Official Language Act* was unconstitutional.⁴ Could Saskatchewan and Alberta legislation have the same fate?⁵

Between 1980 and 1988, Father Mercure and the western Canadian francophone communities rallied in order to bring Mercure's challenge to the Supreme Court in order to have French recognized as an official language along with English in Saskatchewan and Alberta.⁶ This chapter argues that the *Mercure* case provided a judicial and political platform for a number of competing narratives on western Canadian history and society. For the francophones, *Mercure* provided a platform to assert the community's own views on western Canadian history and opened up a new space for francophones to challenge the Saskatchewan political community. Although education was a key portfolio for francophone activism and political aspirations in western Canada between 1970 and 1980, the campaign to have French recognised as an official language at the provincial level increased in importance between 1980 and 1988. As the Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan (ACFC) declared in 1980: "We want to be clear at the outset that in speaking of linguistic rights we are not alluding only to the right to instruction in French. Rather we refer to an ensemble of rights in different fields, the aim

⁴ News reports noted that "Father Mercure said he had been following the Manitoba case of Georges Forest who, after receiving a parking ticket, found the courts agreed there were bilingual rights being violated in Manitoba." Walter Niekamp, "Saskatchewan French rights go to court," *Prairie Messenger*, 29 March 1981.. For a more complete discussion on the *Forest* decision and the subsequent French-language crisis in Manitoba, See Raymond-M. Hébert, *Manitoba's French-Language Crisis: A Cautionary Tale* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004).

⁵ News media in Saskatchewan and across Canada followed the case with noted excitement. See for example "Cochin priest takes language battle to courts," *North Battleford News-Optimist*, 13 January 1981; "Saskatchewan: lutte pour un procès en français," *Le Droit*, 22 janvier 1981; "Un Oblat exige un procès en français," *Le Droit*, 22 janvier 1981; "Priest wants French trial," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 22 January 1981; "Priest seeks French rights," *Calgary Herald*, 22 January 1981; "Prairie priest wants French trial," *Ottawa Citizen*, 22 January 1981.

⁶ The constitutional questions raised in the *Mercure* case pertained to Alberta as well, since the two provinces shared a single constitutional history. See *Alberta Act, 1905*, 4-5 Edward VIII, c. 3 (Canada); *Saskatchewan Act, 1905*, 4-5 Edward VII, c. 42 (Canada).

of which is to guarantee the normal development of a linguistic and cultural group."⁷ Official bilingualism meant that French could be a public language, giving francophones access to an array of services in French from the provincial government.⁸

For the francophone communities in western Canada, the bilingualism cause went much deeper, however, than mere policy decisions. The quest for official bilingualism was a matter of principle, symbolism, and history.⁹ In fact, Father Mercure was not the first Fransaskois to challenge Saskatchewan's seemingly straightforward, English-only language regime. As early as 1975, for example, Fransaskois historian and community activist René Rottiers went to court over the status of French but was unsuccessful.¹⁰

As a principle, official bilingualism meant, for the Fransaskois, political equality with English-speakers in the province. The symbolism of the *Mercure* case was more complex. For the francophone communities of Saskatchewan and Alberta, *Mercure* was a direct challenge to the unilingual political community and cultural makeup of both provinces. It represented not only an opportunity to have full, legal recognition of French in major public institutions, but also full recognition of the French-Canadian interpretation of western Canadian history.¹¹ The fight

⁷ ACFC, "Brief presented to the Members of the Cabinet of the Government of Saskatchewan," December 1980; also, for example, ACFC, "Brief presented to the Government of Saskatchewan in Regina, Wednesday May 31, 1978," *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan*, D.L. Faris Fonds. See also Education chapter.

⁸ Founded on the idea of "institutional completeness," first coined by Fransaskois sociologist Raymond Breton, the idea of institution- and service-based francophone community development stretches as far back as 1969. See Raymond Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Minorities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," *American Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 2 (September 1964), 193-205. By the 1980s, the debate over francophone community development was at the centre of francophones' relationships with provincial and federal governments. See Martin Normand, *Le développement en contexte: Quatre temps d'un débat au sein des communautés francophones minoritaires (1969-2009)* (Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 2012), 29-48.

⁹ "Symbols are conveyors of meanings. They serve as vehicles for concepts, ideals, worldviews, and collective identities, and as such, can become sources of conflict. At the heart of the conflict is not the object or document itself, but the concepts or ideals that it represents." Raymond Breton, *Ethnic Relations in Canada: Institutional Dynamics* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 150.

¹⁰ "L'être ou ne [PAS] l'être," *L'Eau Vive*, 21 avril 1975, 1 and 5.

¹¹ A number of briefs and documents used by the ACFC when dealing with the provincial government bear witness to this preoccupation. A 1983 document presented to provincial Cabinet, for example, underlined that "Dans le domaine du patrimoine, les Fransaskois veulent la reconnaissance et la mise en valeur du rôle qu'ils ont joué dans le

for bilingualism during the 1980s was about much more than narrow legal and constitutional questions: it was about whose memory, and whose interpretation of history, would be recognized.¹² Legal recognition of the francophone historical interpretation would therefore be a major victory for francophones in both Saskatchewan and Alberta. If political recognition for the Fransaskois vision of history and society was close to impossible through the parliamentary system, the legal system provided an avenue through which the community could further press and legitimize its political demands. Winning a bilingualism case in the Supreme Court of Canada would be about much more than simply expanding or bolstering bilingualism -- it meant receiving the highest judicial endorsement for their vision of society and history.

For the English-speaking community and the Saskatchewan government, victory in *Mercurie* meant a vindication of the status quo and reassurance that bilingualism was not compulsory in a province where it was viewed with suspicion or hostility. It is important to note that prairie opposition to bilingualism was not entirely a function of "right-wing authoritarianism" or bigotry as some authors have argued.¹³ While it is true that some leaders and supporters of the western Canadian political right disliked bilingualism out of bigotry towards French Canadians, the real opposition to French as an official language in the West arose from the idea that it was simply incompatible with the political community and history of the region. Indeed, the Saskatchewan government's reaction to the *Mercurie* decision was indicative of the power of a certain ideal of western Canadian history and society. In its handling of the *Mercurie* decision, Saskatchewan demonstrated the pervasiveness of unilingualism in western Canada.

développement de la province." ACFC, "Sommaire du mémoire présenté au Cabinet provincial de la Saskatchewan," 16 février 1983. [PAS], Conseil culturel fransaskois Fonds.

¹² Here it is useful to quote Breton's characterization of the dynamics and symbolism of constitutions and policies: "Although they may have the practical purpose of regulating behavior or allocating resources, they are primarily affirmations of particular values in society. They signify principles of social and political organization and cultural identity, and refer to the history and projected future of the collectivity." Breton, *Ethnic Relations in Canada*, 151.

¹³ See for example Hébert, *Manitoba's French-Language Crisis*.

Early Rumblings: Fransaskois Activism Awakens

The push for official bilingualism in Saskatchewan began not only with provincial initiative but also with federal political pressure in the mid-1970s. The Fédération des Francophones Hors Quebec (FFHQ), founded in 1975 following years of protracted discussions amongst francophone communities in the nine provinces¹⁴, promoted revitalization of Canada's francophone minority communities and provided for a united political voice in national politics. In its second volume of *The Heirs of Lord Durham*¹⁵ (*Les héritiers de Lord Durham*), published in 1977, the FFHQ emphasized the poor track record of western Canadian governments on French language rights throughout the region's history. French Canadians had been treated by the majority as little more than "white niggers" despite "masks of liberality and good faith."¹⁶ It was time for a solution, an end to linguistic assimilation. The first recommendation of the FFHQ was that Saskatchewan make French an official language, giving it equal status with English.¹⁷ Saskatchewan should recognize official bilingualism, the document affirmed, as it fell under the category of "fundamental rights" and would aid the community's cultural development. This pressure on Saskatchewan from the FFHQ was joined by the Secretary of State, who argued that

¹⁴ Michael Behiels offers a comprehensive account of the founding years of the FFHQ in *Canada's Francophone Minority Communities*, 3-52. The principal mandate of the FFHQ was to pressure all levels of government to expand French-language rights and help further the interests of francophone minority communities. It also acted as a support network to the various provincial francophone representative groups, helping them to shore up political and financial support for a number of activities.

¹⁵ *Les héritiers de Lord Durham* was a manifesto that condemned past federal and provincial governments for playing key roles in the disappearance and assimilation of francophone minority communities. Published in two volumes, *Les héritiers de Lord Durham* also declared that "we will not be used as pawns by the federal government" and "our firm intention to enter the debate [on national unity] with all the strength of our one million people, and to make our fundamental aspirations clearly known to the entire country." FFHQ, *The Heirs of Lord Durham: The Francophones outside Quebec speak out* (FFHQ, 1978), 17. The manifesto underlined the need for a constitutionally enforceable status for French in the provinces since "official recognition of French in some provinces does not go beyond wishful thinking and statements of good intentions." *Ibid*, 19.

¹⁶ The term references Pierre Vallières' classic, radical treatise on the condition of francophones in Quebec, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (*White Niggers of America*) (Quebec: Éditions Partis pris, 1968). See "French said treated like 'white niggers'," *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 26 May 1977, 8.

¹⁷ ACFC, "Communiqué de presse, le 25 mai 1977," [*PAS*], Conseil culturel fransaskois Fonds.

an "equal partnership" between French and English speakers was impossible in Canada without strong provincial commitment in favour of official bilingualism.¹⁸

If Premier Allan Blakeney's government had concerns about political fallout related to provincial bilingualism, it was careful not to adopt a strong public position on the question. As a nation, Canada was still working through many of its issues related to language rights. With the election of René Lévesque's Parti Québécois in 1976, the Quebec question continued to dominate federal politics. Saskatchewan would have to work with the federal government and show its willingness to make compromises and promote bilingualism for the cause of national unity. On the other hand, Saskatchewan supported stronger provincial control over languages within provincial jurisdiction in order to gain Quebec's support on the natural resources question, which dogged intergovernmental relations for Canada and Saskatchewan during the 1970s.¹⁹ Given surging regional discontent in the West, Saskatchewan would cooperate on bilingualism if Quebec agreed to leave the resources question alone.²⁰

The Saskatchewan government was quietly concerned, however, about the zeal with which the Fransaskois insisted that French still enjoyed official status in provincial government institutions.²¹ In a 1980 briefing note on the legal status of French in Saskatchewan the civil service noted that "In the past, our position has been that s. 110 has no continuing effect. The legal position is not that clear. At the moment there are no clear-cut answers to the legal

¹⁸ Sheila Arnopoulos, "Provinces told to improve French status," *Montreal Star*, 19 April 1977.

¹⁹ Roy Romanow, John Whyte, and Howard Leeson, *Canada...Notwithstanding* (Toronto: Thomson Carswell, 2007), 1-16.

²⁰ As Premier Blakeney himself noted in 1981, "During the referendum debate, I argued that the West must be prepared to recognize the aspirations of Quebec. I also argued that the West needed constitutional assurances of our right to manage and control our own resources. We had our own priorities, but were always prepared to be flexible." Notes for remarks by Premier Allan Blakeney, Canadian Press Club, 26 March 1981. *Provincial Archives of Alberta* [[PAA]], PR1985.401), vol. 300.

²¹ In Alberta the government was concerned about the language question right up to the *Mercure* decision in 1988. In a 1987 memo to Premier Getty, Alberta Attorney General James Horsman complained that other French-language test cases (including lower-court decisions on *Mercure*) offered "no guidance on the interpretation or application of s. 110 to the use of French in the debates of the Legislative Assembly or in its records or journals." Horsman to Getty, 13 October 1987. [[PAA]], Don Getty Fonds, File 235.

questions in this area."²² The brief recommended that the premier and ministers make no public comment on the question; privately, the government's position should be that "there are no entrenched language rights in this province; s. 110 of The North-West Territories Act was not continued by The Saskatchewan Act."²³

The increasing aggressiveness of Fransaskois political action, especially the strengthening of links between the FFHQ and the ACFC, made the government uneasy.²⁴ Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba had strong reservations about the federal government's promotion of official languages in the provinces, which was seen as an attempt to undermine traditional parliamentary powers of the provincial legislatures and western Canadians' right to decide language and cultural policies.²⁵ Making concessions for French in education was one thing, but for French to enjoy official status along with English in the legislature, courts, and government was another matter entirely. Official bilingualism in areas outside of education threatened to give the language debate a new dimension. Bilingualism put into question the historical and cultural character of the Saskatchewan. It presupposed that Saskatchewan was, perhaps, not as different from eastern Canada after all. This notion was offensive to many westerners. Bilingualism policy also presumed that the francophones were somehow more special than other groups who had also worked hard to found western Canada.²⁶ As such, the Saskatchewan government remained deeply suspicious of official bilingualism.²⁷

²² Saskatchewan, "Briefing Note: Legal Status of French in Saskatchewan," May 1980. [PAS], Allan Blakeney Fonds.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ As Laurence Ready, the Associate Deputy Minister of Education wrote in 1978: "If l'A.C.F.C. is going to use that national organization [the FFHQ] which is committed to militancy and confrontation to promote its objectives in Saskatchewan, then the value of continuing consultation with l'A.C.F.C. may well be questioned." L.M. Ready to Don Faris, 30 May 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

²⁵ Romanow, Whyte, and Leeson, *Canada...Notwithstanding*, 13.

²⁶ Smith, *The Regional Decline of a National Party*, 109, 113, and 133.

²⁷ "...westerners viewed with astonishment the eastern interpretation arising out of the 'Quebec fact' of the 1960s and 1970s. In the newly defined alignment of the country, the west now found itself grouped with Ontario as 'English

Memory in Competition: Government and Fransaskois Historical Understandings

When Father Mercure launched his legal challenge, bilingualism was as politically explosive in western Canada as it was a century earlier. During the 1970s Saskatchewan had been able to brush the language question aside for the most part by arguing that it had already made efforts towards arresting assimilation and fostering national unity by improving French-language education. The province also attempted to mitigate political fallout from the expansion of official bilingualism by spinning it as part of its multiculturalism policies, with limited success. The multiculturalism-bilingualism position became more and more difficult to maintain, however, as the francophones demanded that provincial statutes be translated and that the Legislature and courts be recognized as officially bilingual.²⁸

The importance of memory in the *Mercure* case was evident in the political strategies of both the francophone community and the Saskatchewan government. Both were conditioned by how each interpreted the history of western Canada. In the Fransaskois case, the memory of an older western Canada -- the bilingual North-West Territories, when French speakers enjoyed demographic prominence, strong clerical representation, and separate schools -- fuelled the contemporary drive towards an officially bilingual province. The memory of a bilingual West was explicitly articulated and perpetuated by francophone community leaders, not only to provide historical justification for bilingualism but also to justify the existence of the community and the ACFC themselves. Memory not only recalls history, it justifies the present. In other

Canada', presumably with a special antagonism towards 'French Canada'." Eager, *Saskatchewan Government*, 188. See also Smith, *The Regional Decline of a National Party*, 129.

²⁸ The link between school rights and official bilingualism should not have surprised the government, since throughout the 1970s the ACFC continually linked educational advances with the "need for a global government policy re French language and culture" and "recognition of the French fact in Saskatchewan." Saskatchewan, "Notes taken at a meeting between a committee of Cabinet and l'Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan," 31 May 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds.

words, the francophone interpretation of Saskatchewan history placed the community in a political-temporal space and situated the community within the broader political community of western Canada. The official history of the ACFC published in 1977, for example, argued that:

Bien souvent, lorsqu'on parle des droits du français en Saskatchewan, ou de l'enseignement en français, une bonne partie des nôtres ignorent les fondations de ces revendications. Souvent aussi, lorsqu'il est question du rôle, des buts, des activités de l'A.C.F.C., on réalise mal le travail gigantesque que notre association a effectué depuis sa fondation, et l'importance pour tout Fransaskois de lui accorder sa collaboration et son appui total.²⁹

It was politically important for the Fransaskois to ensure that bilingualism was seen as more than a passing fad in federal politics. In the West, the ACFC believed, bilingualism had real historical roots. The idea of two founding nations was not a modern invention, the ACFC affirmed; rather, it was something recognized and proven by a number of legislative provisions for official bilingualism in the North-West.³⁰ Bilingualism in the North-West Territories, the ACFC argued, even withstood repeated attacks on its status. When the Territorial Assembly led by Frederick Haultain attempted to abolish official bilingualism in 1892, its efforts were in vain since Lieutenant Governor Joseph Royal apparently never proclaimed Haultain's resolution to abolish the use of French in the Territorial Assembly:

Il est donc permis de conclure aujourd'hui en l'absence manifeste de la Sanction Royale que l'amendement apporté en 1892 à l'article 11 de l'Acte des Territoires du Nord-Ouest de 1877, n'est jamais devenu loi, et que le français est donc resté depuis lors -- il y a cent ans de cela à la date où nous écrivons -- langue officielle à la Législature des Territoires du Nord-Ouest. Il n'a jamais cessé de l'être non plus devant tout tribunal de la Saskatchewan (et de l'Alberta).³¹

²⁹ Rottiers, *Soixante-cinq années de lutttes*, i. Rottiers also launched a series of historical articles consisting of an abridged version of Fransaskois history in *L'Eau Vive* in 1982. His goal was to "mettre en valeur les efforts des Canadiens français en vue de bâtir dans l'Ouest canadien une autre patrie française au Canada," and he encouraged readers to clip articles for reference purposes and memory. Rottiers, "Histoire abrégée de la Fransaskoisie," *L'Eau Vive*, 3 février 1982, 3.

³⁰ Rottiers, *Soixante-cinq années de lutttes*, 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

Determined to prove its historical legitimacy as a founding people of western Canada, the Fransaskois community used this interpretation of Saskatchewan and western Canadian history to its advantage on a number of occasions even before the *Mercure* case was launched.³² The historical interpretation itself was not entirely new. The ACFC history actually built on a number of studies published as part of the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* and as part of the general interest in language rights during the 1960s. These works suggested that French was still an official language in both Saskatchewan and Alberta because section 110 of the *North-West Territories Act, 1877* had been carried over into Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905.³³ Nobody was completely certain if the statute was still in operation, or if it had been constitutionally entrenched. After all, English was simply assumed to be the official language of Saskatchewan and Alberta, and the courts had not yet dealt with the question in a definitive manner.³⁴

³² ACFC, "Brief presented to the Government of Saskatchewan in Regina," 31 May 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds. This document quotes Rottiers' book extensively in order to back up the community's historical claims for bilingualism in Saskatchewan. A 3 January 1978 ACFC press release, which accompanied the publishing of the 65th anniversary history of the ACFC, also claimed that French was an official language in Saskatchewan and "Saskatchewan francophones demand of their provincial government, the official recognition of these linguistic rights." ACFC, "Communiqué de presse/News release," 3 January 1978. [PAS], D. Faris Fonds; also Irène Chabot to Allan Blakeney, 3 January 1978. [PAS], D.L. Faris Fonds. The ACFC also argued in its brief to the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution in 1980 that "le statut officiel du français en Saskatchewan n'est pas reconnu." "Résumé du mémoire présenté par l'ACFC au Comité spécial mixte du Sénat et de la Chambre sur la Constitution," *L'Eau Vive*, 14 janvier 1981, 10.

³³ Herbert Marx, "Language Rights in the Canadian Constitution," *Revue juridique Thémis* 2 (1967), 272-273; Claude-Armand Sheppard, *The Law of Languages in Canada* (Ottawa: Studies of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1971), 87-90.

³⁴ There were a number of cases in Saskatchewan and Alberta dealing with various aspects of s. 110, but none of them amounted to a ruling on the full scope of s. 110. In *Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Alberta v. Lefebvre*, [1982] 5 W.W.R. 481, Yvon Lefebvre sought a trial in French for a traffic violation but was refused on appeal when the Court ruled that s. 110 no longer applied to Alberta's courts. *Lefebvre v. The Queen*, [1987] 1 W.W.R. 481. Another case, *Paquette v. Canada*, [1987] ABCA 228, dealt with the scope of s. 110 in an accused's right to a French language trial in Alberta in criminal matters. In Saskatchewan the *Reference re French Language Rights of Accused in Saskatchewan Criminal Proceedings*, [1987] SKCA 204 dealt with the scope of s. 110 in that province and ruled that an accused could still use French before the province's courts.

The Saskatchewan government also used different historical interpretations and "memories" of western Canada in order to justify its language policies.³⁵ The government interpretation of western Canadian history was quite different from that of the Fransaskois community. It consisted of a reflection of the values of western Canadians forged over time and through unilingual institutions, multicultural ideals, and pitched battles with Ottawa in a number of areas.³⁶ As such, the Saskatchewan government was skeptical of the Fransaskois community's interpretation of the status of French in the province. In a 1978 review of the legal status of French in Saskatchewan undertaken by the executive council, the government acknowledged the existence of bilingualism in the North-West Territories after 1877 but noted that any idea that the old statutes were still in force rested on an "extremely tenuous argument."³⁷ Other studies commissioned by the provincial government on non-English language education in 1966 and again in 1978 supported this view and re-affirmed that Saskatchewan held exclusive jurisdiction over language in education and the workings of the Legislature.³⁸ The government strongly believed that these were provincial matters and was confident that its interpretation of history was the correct one. No further action would be necessary on official bilingualism in Saskatchewan.

³⁵ The link between regional, territorial, and national identities and the making of social policy is an emerging field in Political Science. See for example Daniel Béland and André Lecours, *Nationalism and Social Policy: The Politics of Territorial Solidarity* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2008). In the case of Saskatchewan and Alberta, many researchers have pointed to resource policies or party politics as driving the development of provincial identity and culture but few have paid attention to language or bilingualism as a factor. See J.C. Herbert and Ronald D. Kneebone, "Socialists, Populists, Resources, and the Divergent Development of Alberta and Saskatchewan," *Canadian Public Policy* 34, no. 4 (2008), 419-440 and David E. Smith, "Parallel Provinces: Saskatchewan and Alberta," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2010), 5-25.

³⁶ See chapter on multiculturalism.

³⁷ Howard Leeson to Don Faris, May 30 1978. *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan*, D.L. Faris Fonds. In his brief, Leeson also argued that "The facts, as presented [by the ACFC], are both wrong and incomplete...To establish an argument on the basis that a particular section of the old N.W.T. Act was not 'officially abolished' is certainly questionable. The claims that French retains an official status in Saskatchewan are not substantial."

³⁸ Saskatchewan, *Report of the Saskatchewan Committee on Instruction in Languages Other than English* (Regina, 1966), 4-9; also L.H. Bergstrom to I.J. Wilson, October 9 1978. *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan* D.L. Faris Fonds.

The ACFC could not accept a political status quo on language, especially one based on an interpretation of history that denied rights to the francophone community. The organisation continued to look into the history on French status and usage in the province. In December 1979 the ACFC commissioned a legal study by Fransaskois lawyer Raymond Blais in order to clarify the Saskatchewan language question "without equivocation."³⁹ His conclusions were diametrically opposed to the provincial government's 1978 briefing. Blais suggested that French remained an official language in Saskatchewan and could be used before the province's courts, Legislature, and in the printing of provincial statutes.⁴⁰ This rendition of the legal history of French was good news to the Fransaskois community, whose resolve to test the status of French was growing by the day.

With Saskatchewan continuing to deny that official bilingualism had any historical or legal foundation in the province and the ACFC affirming the opposite, the stage was set for a conflict of memory and history. The status of French would have to be decided in the courts, and now with Father Mercure's speeding ticket, a constitutional challenge could be launched.⁴¹

Action-Reaction: Activism, Negotiations, and *Mercure* Before the Courts

The ACFC wasted little time using the *Mercure* case to keep official bilingualism on the provincial political agenda. In January 1981, less than a week before the challenge was heard by the Provincial Court of Saskatchewan, the ACFC met with Premier Blakeney and members of

³⁹ ACFC, "Le cas Mercure et le statut légal du français en Saskatchewan," 29 septembre 1981. *Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan*, Conseil culturel fransaskois Fonds.

⁴⁰ Ray J. Blais, "Statut de la langue française devant les tribunaux et l'Assemblée législative de la province de la Saskatchewan." [PAA], PR001 (ACFA Fonds), box 5, vol. 92.31. See also "Statut juridique du français," *L'Eau Vive*, 19 novembre 1980, 2.

⁴¹ As Claude-Armand Sheppard noted, it was a complex legal question that "should be pointed out and solved either by judicial decision or by legislation." Sheppard, *The Law of Languages in Canada*, 91. It is difficult to see, however, how the problem could be dealt with in any other manner other than through the Courts since bilingualism was such a contentious issue for western Canadians.

the provincial cabinet and asked that French be recognized along with English as an official language.⁴² With official bilingualism should come funding for government services in addition to "des structures nécessaires pour l'exercice de ce droit."⁴³ The government took the case seriously. In a 1983 briefing to the new Progressive Conservative Minister of Justice Gary Lane, the Constitutional Branch of the Department of Justice noted that "...the file indicates that both Premier Blakeney and Mr. Romanow took a very active interest in the case, presumably because it raised the broad and important issue of the status of the French language in Saskatchewan."⁴⁴ Both the Blakeney and Devine governments took similar positions on the question. Saskatchewan was not, in the opinion of either government, a bilingual province.

The Provincial Court of Saskatchewan rendered its decision in *Regina v. Mercure* in April 1981. Judge Deshayé rejected Father Mercure's request to have the provincial statutes relevant to his case translated into French and for a French-language trial. At the same time, though, Deshayé ruled that section 110 had never been repealed by the Saskatchewan legislature and as a result Mercure could use French before the province's courts with the aid of a translator.⁴⁵ Deshayé also rejected the government's argument that section 110 of the *North-West Territories Act* was no longer in force in the province. Rather, Deshayé explained, the question at issue was the extent to which s. 110 was still valid in Saskatchewan, and what obligations it placed on the provincial government.⁴⁶

Deshayé's ambivalent decision emboldened the Fransaskois community. *L'Eau Vive* called it a "moral victory."⁴⁷ ACFC president Irène Chabot, in solidarity with Father Mercure,

⁴² "Les Fransaskois au gouvernement provincial," *L'Eau Vive*, 7 janvier 1981, 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Department of Justice, Constitutional Branch, "Mercure v. Attorney General of Saskatchewan," 9 May 1983. [PAS], Paul Rousseau Fonds.

⁴⁵ *Regina v. Mercure*, [1981] 6 W.C.B. 85.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 12.

⁴⁷ "Le juge donne son verdict... Victoire morale pour le Père Mercure," *L'Eau Vive*, 29 avril 1981, 3.

found herself in court a month later for refusing to pay an English-only ticket because "l'article 110 de l'Acte des Territoires du Nord-Ouest existe toujours."⁴⁸ The ACFC moved to adopt a more official and organized approach to the *Mercure* case. On 20 June the ACFC board met to discuss what further action was necessary to help Father Mercure win, and voted unanimously to support the case morally and financially.⁴⁹

Francophone activism surrounding the *Mercure* case borrowed from earlier strategies used to support education, communications/media, and politics.⁵⁰ The Fransaskois first mobilized regional political networks in western Canada in order to boost Mercure's chance of success. The ACFC began with its Albertan counterpart, the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA), and was delighted when the ACFA immediately announced its own unanimous support for Mercure's case.⁵¹ With this moral solidarity came an immediate payment of \$1000 from the ACFA to kick off a fund for Father Mercure's legal costs, in addition to a call for Franco-Albertans to provide further donations.⁵² This campaign for donations harkened back to the early history of the ACFC when the organization sought financial support from French Canadians as far away as Montreal in order to counter the provincial government's repression of French-language education. Franco-Albertan generosity prompted Chabot and the ACFC to announce a second instalment of "Opération Solidarité" on 29 September 1981. The first Opération Solidarité campaign, unveiled in September 1980, successfully raised over \$5000 from community donors in order to support a group of parents in Prince Albert and Vonda who

⁴⁸ "Mme. Chabot refuse de payer sa contravention," *L'Eau Vive*, 13 mai 1981, 16. My translation.

⁴⁹ "L'A.C.F.C. appuie sans réserve le Père Mercure dans sa lutte," *L'Eau Vive*, 24 juin 1981, 4.

⁵⁰ See sections on education and radio in previous chapters.

⁵¹ "L'ACFA appuie la cause Mercure," *Le franco-albertain*, 17 juin 1981, 2; "L'A.C.F.A. appuie le cas MERCURE et lance une campagne de souscription," *L'Eau Vive*, 24 juin 1981.

⁵² ACFA, "Communiqué-News Release," [PAS] Conseil culturel fransaskois Fonds.

were using the courts to gain better access to French-language education.⁵³ The second campaign, aptly titled "Faites monter le Mercur!" (*let's raise the Mercury!*) sought to raise \$10000 in one year. Between September 1981 and February 1982 close to \$4000 was gathered in donations from across Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Canada.⁵⁴

The prospect of using political pressure on the provincial government seemed to improve in 1982. Progressive Conservative Premier Grant Devine, who won the provincial election in April by a landslide over Allan Blakeney's NDP, made few real commitments towards official bilingualism in Saskatchewan. He did, however, make an attempt at open dialogue with the Fransaskois community by agreeing to regular meetings between ACFC leaders and cabinet. The ACFC continued to use these meetings as an opportunity to reiterate the organisation's perspective on western Canada's history and the Fransaskois' pioneering role in creating the province.

In February 1983 the ACFC met with the provincial government in order to talk about how the Fransaskois might "vivre comme citoyens à part entière de la Saskatchewan."⁵⁵ In order to do so, the Fransaskois required "la reconnaissance et la mise en valeur du rôle qu'ils ont joué dans le développement de la province" in addition to "des services publics sociaux, de santé juridique, etc...en français."⁵⁶ This particular meeting was a mild success, although Irène Chabot was disappointed with Justice Minister Gary Lane, whose absence made it impossible for the two sides to discuss the ongoing *Mercur* case.⁵⁷

⁵³ "Opération Solidarité - Campagne Provinciale de Fonds," 19 September 1980. [PAS], Conseil culturel fransaskois Fonds. See also chapter three.

⁵⁴ "Faites monter le Mercur!," *L'Eau Vive*, 3 février 1982.

⁵⁵ "Suite à la rencontre avec le Cabinet Devine, l'ACFC et les francophones devront s'armer de patience," *L'Eau Vive*, 23 février 1983, p.1.

⁵⁶ ACFC, "Sommaire du mémoire présenté au Cabinet provincial de la Saskatchewan," 16 février 1983. [PAS], Conseil culturel fransaskois Fonds.

⁵⁷ "Suite à la rencontre avec le Cabinet Devine, l'ACFC et les francophones devront s'armer de patience," *L'Eau Vive*, 23 février 1983, 1.

There is little evidence that either the ACFC or the provincial government made attempts at negotiating the legal and historical questions of the *Mercure* case outside of the courts. It is probable that both the Fransaskois and the Saskatchewan government wished to avoid any unnecessary backlash from an out-of-court settlement; it is also probable that both parties believed they had much more to gain from a judicial victory in the courts rather than a political compromise. The government was certainly concerned with the potential outcome of the case. In a briefing to Minister of Justice Gary Lane, the Department of Justice stressed *Mercure's* "legal significance and political sensitivity."⁵⁸ More unsettling was the briefing's final thought:

The government's legal position is that (except for the language of education rights in s. 23 of the Charter) French is on the same footing as any other language (except English) in Saskatchewan. In other words, French enjoys the same legal status as German or Ukrainian...it is by no means certain, however, that we will win this case. Like Quebec and Manitoba before us, it is possible that the Court will render a decision which is quite supportive of the legal status of French in our Legislature and courts. If this happens you will have to decide whether to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada and what, if any, legislative action is appropriate.

The situation in neighbouring Manitoba was just as troubling. Simmering regional tensions over language came to a head in that province in 1983-1984. Howard Pawley's provincial NDP government attempted to expand French-language services to the local population following negotiations with the Société franco-manitobaine.⁵⁹ Progressive Conservative opposition to any extension of bilingualism beyond the bare legal minimum ignited a political firestorm that almost shut down the government. The Fransaskois looked on with dismay and saw the Manitoba language dispute as yet another example of history repeating itself: "à 1890, 1917, 1929, etc., il faut maintenant ajouter 1983-84."⁶⁰ The Manitoba case demonstrated to the Fransaskois

⁵⁸ Department of Justice, Constitutional Branch, "Mercure v. Attorney General of Saskatchewan," 9 May 1983. [PAS], Paul Rousseau Fonds.

⁵⁹ See Hébert, *Manitoba's French-Language Crisis*.

⁶⁰ "Selon l'ACFC, la voie juridique est l'alternative unique qui s'ouvre à la communauté fransaskoise," *L'Eau Vive*, le 7 mars 1984, 3.

community that negotiations and political niceties would not yield much in terms of results. The courts were the best answer, and perhaps the only one.⁶¹

The increasing trend towards using the courts for francophone activism was reflected in the ACFC public message to the Fransaskois. In January 1985 the organization published a number of advertisements in *L'Eau Vive* encouraging the Fransaskois to openly contest speeding tickets, parking tickets, red light tickets -- any traffic offenses wherein they could "Demande[r] que la justice soit rendue dans votre langue."⁶² Why? "Vous aiderez ainsi les Fransaskois à obtenir des services en français dans les cours et à aider le cas MERCURE."⁶³ In order to help francophones willing to challenge English-only tickets the ACFC also drafted and published a "Trousse d'auto-défense en cour" which detailed the proper procedures for filing legal grievances, legal arguments which could be used in court, and points being raised by the *Mercur*e case.⁶⁴

By 1985 relations between Devine's government and the Fransaskois had broken down on virtually all questions related to French in the province. A request for funding for adult French-language courses at Collège Mathieu was met with a "NON catégorique."⁶⁵ As for the status of French in the courts, the government invited the Fransaskois community to simply challenge its position regarding English-only trials for criminal cases. The community was more than happy to oblige but demanded that Saskatchewan pay its legal fees.⁶⁶ It was an ostensibly political move by Devine. If the government lost, it could say that it did its best to defend its point of view and blame the courts for giving a decision favourable towards the francophones; if

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² ACFC, "Pour que la justice soit rendue en FRANCAIS aussi bien qu'en ANGLAIS," advertisement published in *L'Eau Vive*, le 23 janvier 1985, 12 and le 13 février 1985, 16.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ "Trousse d'auto-défense en cour," *L'Eau Vive*, le 6 février 1985, 2.

⁶⁵ "Un autre 'NON' catégorique de la part du Cabinet DEVINE, le sujet: un collège communautaire fransaskois," *L'Eau Vive*, le 15 mai 1985, 2.

⁶⁶ "L'A.C.F.C. invitée par le gouvernement à défendre son point," *L'Eau Vive*, le 28 août 1985, 5.

the government won, its point of view would simply be confirmed. The courts were, in many ways, a win-win avenue for the provincial government in defending its vision on language. As Justice Minister Gary Lane told the Fransaskois, the government of Saskatchewan had no legal basis to provide any services in French.⁶⁷

One Province, Two Histories: *Mercure* on Appeal

The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal handed down its decision on the status of French in Saskatchewan on October 28, 1985. It was another symbolic victory for Father Mercure. Justice Bayda fully upheld the lower court's 1981 ruling that section 110 was still in force in Saskatchewan because it had never been explicitly or implicitly repealed by the provincial government. The law, however, did not require the province to provide a French-language trial.⁶⁸ Saskatchewan was also under no obligation to proclaim and print its statutes in both English and French. Rather, Bayda explained, the legislative dispositions in s. 110 were statutory *powers* of the Legislature rather than *duties* imposed by the constitution.⁶⁹ The intentions of Parliament in enacting s. 110 were to give a permissive bilingualism to the North-West Territories rather than a compulsory one.⁷⁰ In other words, even if the legal and historical record showed the existence of official language provisions for both French and English, these measures were quite limited and under no circumstances did they impose a requirement on the province.

On January 27, 1986 the Supreme Court of Canada granted leave to appeal to Father Mercure, thereby agreeing to hear his challenge and rule on whether or not French enjoyed equal status with English in Saskatchewan. Less than a month later, on February 15, the ACFC board

⁶⁷ Pierre Brault, "Selon Gary Lane '...nous n'avons pas l'obligation légale de fournir des services en français,'" *L'Eau Vive*, le 16 octobre 1985, 2.

⁶⁸ *Regina v. Mercure*, [1985] 15 W.C.B. 329.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 29-30.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 37.

voted unanimously to intervene directly in the case.⁷¹ Outside Saskatchewan, the case also continued to garner attention. In Alberta, the ACFA sought intervenor status following a legal study that recommended the organisation step up to defend Franco-Albertan interests.⁷² The ACFC was hesitant about its Albertan counterpart being involved and worried about losing full control over the direction of the case, but legal costs were high and it would be difficult for the Fransaskois to shoulder the financial burden on their own. As a result, the ACFC began tripartite discussions with the ACFA as well as the FFHQ to see how the three organizations could intervene together and split the costs evenly. In early March, the President of the FFHQ, Gilles Le Blanc, informed the ACFC and ACFA that it would also intervene in the case and would assume its share of legal costs.⁷³ Over the following months, the three organizations maintained close contacts on legal strategy, public relations, and financing of the case.⁷⁴

But these positive developments were overshadowed by a major problem: Father Mercure's health was failing. In 1984 he was diagnosed with cancer. On April 29, 1986 he passed away at 64 years of age, leaving the case in uncertainty. Was it over? Would the Supreme Court allow the challenge to continue if the ACFC and the Fransaskois were willing to carry on the case in his name? From both the Fransaskois' and the provincial government's point of view, the trial should continue. Both parties wanted to put an end to the debate once and for all.⁷⁵ The Supreme Court heard arguments in mid-June as to whether the appeal should be heard given the

⁷¹ Roger Gauthier to Gilles Leblanc, 7 mars 1986. [PAA], PR0015.0011, Box 5, vol. 92.31.

⁷² Mary T. Moreau à Paul Poirier, 3 février 1986. [PAA], PR1992.0031, file 62. Moreau, who was commissioned by the ACFA to investigate whether or not it would be to the organisation's advantage to intervene, wrote that "la participation de l'ACFA dans l'appel Mercure au niveau de la Cour Suprême du Canada est non seulement souhaitable mais essentielle puisque les questions en cause n'affectent pas seulement 'un petit oblat des prairies', mais toute la population canadienne-française de la Saskatchewan de l'Alberta...c'est une demande forte difficile à refuser, compte tenu d'un des objectifs de l'ACFA."

⁷³ Gilles LeBlanc to Miriam Laberge-Deslauriers, 7 mars 1986. [PAA], PR0015.0011, Box 5, 92.31.

⁷⁴ Michel Bastarache, "Avis de requête," [PAA], PR0015.0011, Box 5, vol. 92.31.

⁷⁵ "Cas Mercure: la province dit OUI!" *L'Eau Vive*, le 18 juin 1986, 15.

plaintiff's death, and agreed in August that the questions were important enough that the case be allowed to continue.⁷⁶

Both Saskatchewan and Alberta took a hard line during their late November 1986 presentation to the Supreme Court. The Saskatchewan attorney general argued that the history of western Canada showed that section 110 was no longer of any force in the province. As of 1670, English was the official language of the entire territory that would later become Saskatchewan.⁷⁷ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, massive immigration to the North-West Territories had reduced francophones to a tiny minority and led to the disappearance of the French language in Courts and the Legislature. The Saskatchewan Attorney General also argued that the *Saskatchewan Act*, which contained no explicit references to language rights, reflected this historical fact:

Parliament included no language provisions in The Saskatchewan Act. The significance of that omission is obvious. It is submitted that Parliament would have made express provision if it had intended to carry forward, even without special status, so specific and significant a provision as section 110 and to apply it in the context of a new province...Denominational education and language rights were the constitutional pre-occupations of the era. The lack of any reference to language rights strongly suggests that the provisions of section 110 were not carried forward.⁷⁸

Regardless of the status of French before 1905, Saskatchewan explained, the weight of history at the turn of the twentieth century made its official use in the new provinces completely irrelevant. Immigration from Europe changed the face of Saskatchewan, eliminating the dual English-French character of the province and region.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ "Le cas Mercure: la Cour suprême dit 'oui'," *L'Eau Vive*, le 6 août 1986, 2.

⁷⁷ Saskatchewan, "Factum of the Attorney General of Saskatchewan, Respondent." *[[PAA]]*, PR0015.0011, box 5, 92.31.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

This argument was representative of the subtraction by multiculturalism perspective, which posited that the existence of many different ethnic groups in Saskatchewan made favouring or giving special rights to one particular minority group problematic, since all groups were founding members of the province. This argument was not a denial that the francophones formed part of Saskatchewan society, nor that bilingualism existed in the past. Rather, it held that the Fransaskois were not special among the many minority groups in the province.

The Attorney General of Alberta argued that the history of western Canada simply did not support Father Mercure's legal argument. Although section 110 provided for bilingualism in the North-West Territories after 1877, by 1890 this provision was not accepted by the territorial public:

...the sentiment of the people of the Northwest Territories was, as evidenced by the petitions read before the House of Commons during the 1890 debates, firmly against the dual language provisions. Additional evidence of the unsuitability of French language guarantees for the Northwest Territories in 1905 can be found in the fact that the Parliament of Canada repealed section 110 in 1905 concurrently with the passage of the Saskatchewan Act.⁸⁰

It was an interesting angle for the Alberta government when Canada was attempting to find a place for Quebec and French Canadians within the nation. It was also an explicit rejection of the two founding nations ideal as it pertained to western Canada. Western Canada's early political history served as justification for its contemporary English-speaking character. Contemporary Alberta thus reflected the ideals expounded by its first political leaders in favour of one language and one people. The success and singular dominance of this vision, Alberta argued, could be seen in the fact that the French-language question had never been raised in over seventy-five years of provincial history in both Alberta and Saskatchewan. People accepted the founding

⁸⁰ Alberta, "Factum of the Attorney General of Alberta, Respondent." *[[PAA]]*, PR0015.0011, box 5, 92.31.

principle of unilingualism for provincial institutions. The early ideal of one language, one people suited the contemporary conditions reigning in the province.⁸¹

The factum presented by the ACFC, FFHQ, and ACFA gave an entirely different interpretation to the Court. During the Hudson's Bay Company's rule in the North-West, they argued, judges were bilingual and linguistic proficiency was a criteria in their selection. Institutional bilingualism, they explained, existed right up to the creation of Manitoba in 1870. This context, the francophones argued, was the spirit in which s. 110 should be interpreted and understood. It was not a statute invented out of context by someone in Ottawa. It had real applicability in the North-West Territories when it was adopted, and it responded to a local reality.⁸²

Secondly, the francophones implored the Court to take a second look at the status of the French language at the time of Saskatchewan's entry into Confederation. Parliament, the francophones argued, wished to maintain existing law in the Territories:

Il est donc clair qu'au moment où la Saskatchewan fut créée, les parlementaires connaissent la portée de l'article 110 et voulaient en étendre l'application aux nouvelles provinces de la Saskatchewan et de l'Alberta, tant pour ce qui est des nouveaux tribunaux que de la publication des lois. Ils ne voyaient rien d'incompatible entre l'article 110 de la Loi sur la Saskatchewan.⁸³

Contrary to what Saskatchewan and Alberta believed, Parliament knew that it was carrying language rights over into the new provinces. Furthermore, because section 110 was in force when the *Saskatchewan Act* was adopted in 1905 and the latter act was annexed into the new *Constitution Act* in 1982, s. 110 should be treated as a constitutional disposition, not a statute which could be amended. Because s. 110 outlined the fundamental institutions of the province it should not, and could not, be modified by the Legislature. Finally, because the substance of the

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² FFHQ, ACFA and ACFC, "Mémoire des intervenants," 26-27. *[[PAA]]*, PR0015.0011, box 5, 92.31.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

rights outlined in the section were the same as those in Manitoba, all of Saskatchewan's English-only laws should be declared invalid by the Court.⁸⁴

Victory? The *Mercure* Decision and its Discontents

On 25 February 1988 the Supreme Court of Canada handed down its decision. Rather than give a resounding victory to either the Saskatchewan government or Father Mercure, the Court was equivocal. The Court recognized that French was still, legally speaking, an official language in the province. Owing to section 16 in the *Saskatchewan Act, 1905*, section 110 of the *North-West Territories Act* remained in operation in Saskatchewan because the statute had never been repealed. Both Saskatchewan and Alberta had attempted to argue that because of the region's history, and because French had fallen into disuse as an official language, section 110 was no longer valid. Justice La Forest rejected this legal reasoning:

At all events, it does not strike me as a particularly attractive argument to put before a court of justice that a majority can destroy the rights of a minority by simply acting in violation of those rights. Thus, at least as it relates to the language of statutes and proceedings in the courts, s. 110 remained fully in effect at the establishment of the province of Saskatchewan.⁸⁵

In other words, the fact that western Canada's history followed a trajectory towards the disuse of French as an official language did not mean that French ceased to be an official language in Saskatchewan or Alberta. The assumption of unilingualism could not be the basis for its legal justification.

For the Fransaskois and the Franco-Albertans, it was a stunning victory. The ACFA called the *Mercure* decision "a victory for Francophone Albertans after 83 years of injustice."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 19-23.

⁸⁵ *R. v. Mercure*, [1988] 1 S.C.R. 234, 255.

⁸⁶ ACFA, Communiqué, 26 février 1988. [PAA], PR 2006.0318 (ACFA Fonds), Box 43, vol. 625.

The ACFC also viewed the decision as nothing less than a major coup in affirming the francophone historical presence in western Canada:

As they welcome this victory, the Fransaskois acknowledge the historic role played by Louis Riel and the Métis in the shaping and formulating of their rights in the Canadian West. February 25, 1988 will go down in history as a memorable day for the Fransaskois and for all of Saskatchewan. The highest court in the land has confirmed that French has always been and remains an official language in our province. Even though it has been ignored in the 83 years of Saskatchewan's history, our province is officially bilingual.⁸⁷

Proponents of official bilingualism in federal politics also saw the decision as "confirming the vested rights of French-speaking Canadians living in Saskatchewan, rights they have had since 1905."⁸⁸ Indeed, the western Canadian francophone interpretation of history had finally been recognized in the country's highest court. French was still an official language in both provinces.

The Supreme Court, however, placed a significant caveat on this conclusion: the provincial legislatures of Saskatchewan and Alberta had the option to repeal the statute if they wished. The court explained that in 1905 Parliament left the question up to the provinces. Because section 110 was a statute and not a constitutional disposition, it could be repealed.⁸⁹ Thus the *Mercure* decision was also very much a government victory. Saskatchewan and Alberta could decide for themselves how to deal with the French-language question since, as the court ruled, official languages in both provinces fell exclusively within provincial jurisdiction. This reasoning fit well with contemporary ideas on official bilingualism in 1988. Quebec wanted the authority to decide its own provincial language regime; Saskatchewan and Alberta, feeling the heat from anti-bilingualism political parties such as the Western Canada Concept Party, were pleased to know that they could not be blamed for Ottawa imposing bilingualism on them. French-language rights would be decided by the provincial majority rather than by the federal

⁸⁷ ACFC, "Déclaration," 26 février 1988. [PAA], PR 196.416 (ACFA Fonds), Box 30, vol. 481.

⁸⁸ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 25 February 1988.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1988.

government. In this regard *Mercure* was a government victory, since it allowed the provinces to decide for themselves how to proceed.

The Saskatchewan government's reaction to the decision was ready for some time. Ironically, the same day that *Mercure* was handed down, the Interdepartmental Committee on French-Language Services delivered briefing notes to Devine on how Saskatchewan should offer a limited bilingualism. A few months earlier in a speech to the ACFC, Devine had promised to revive the committee and expand French within the provincial government.⁹⁰ The February 25 brief outlined three options on provincial bilingualism:

- a) do-nothing approach - identify and support existing services; probably not acceptable in light of federal-provincial cooperation and francophone minority pressure, and expectations raised by your speech.
- b) general bilingualism approach - preferred by ACFC - not practical in Saskatchewan for financial, cultural, and political reasons.
- c) moderate in-between position (recommended) - improve French-language services where possible and where most needed; more than legally required minimum, not as much as ACFC wants.⁹¹

The third option became the official policy of the government following *Mercure*. True to the ideal of "bilingualism for everyone" established under Blakeney's government, it would provide services to "target groups" who were not only francophones, but also French-speaking anglophones (including French immersion teachers) and civil servants working in intergovernmental relations.⁹² If Saskatchewan was going to have to make its way towards official bilingualism, it could at least argue that it was taking a universal approach to service delivery rather than giving special rights or favours to the Fransaskois.

⁹⁰ Rupert Baudais to Devine, 20 November 1987; Devine to Rupert Baudais, 15 January 1988; Devine to Arthur Denis, 20 January 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

⁹¹ "Briefing Notes for Premier Devine. Interdepartmental Committee on French-Language Services," 25 February 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

⁹² *Ibid.*

Alberta's approach to dealing with *Mercure* resembled the Saskatchewan "in-between" ideal. On 2 March 1988 the Attorney General's office laid out three options for responding to the decision:

1. Comply with s. 110. This would mean all current and future legislation (including regulations) would have to be enacted, printed, and published in both languages.
2. Repeal s. 110 and declare all provincial statutes valid notwithstanding that they were enacted in English only. This repeal and declaration must be contained in bilingual legislation in order to be valid.
3. Repeal s. 110 and replace it with legislation setting out French language rights which would exist in relation to the Legislature and the Courts. (**Comment:** Regardless of Alberta's actions, pending federal legislation will require that individuals accused of Criminal Code offenses after January 1, 1990 have the right to the use of French in proceedings in the criminal courts in Alberta.)⁹³

More important, however, was the brief's recommendation that Alberta coordinate its response to *Mercure* with Saskatchewan since it "May be helpful if both provinces were reasonably consistent in their approaches."⁹⁴ With great potential for national fallout, it would be better for both provinces to show a common front on the language question. Saskatchewan and Alberta continued to consult one another in the several months following *Mercure*. After Saskatchewan adopted Bill 2, for example, Devine's Associate Deputy Minister Norman Riddell notified Alberta Attorney General Deputy Minister A.G. McDonald that "Saskatchewan legislation allows for more French after the bill than before, that practical things have been done in Saskatchewan, [and] that Premier Bourassa is supportive of the Saskatchewan legislation because the legislation improves the situation."⁹⁵

⁹³ Alberta, "The *Mercure* Decision - Implications and Options for Alberta," 2 March 1988. *[[PAA]]*, PR1995.0445/172 vol. I, Box 11.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ A.G. McDonald to Jim Horsman, 28 April 1988. *[[PAA]]*, PR1995.0445 (Don Getty Papers), vol. 172.

The ACFC strategy towards the *Mercure* decision had been formulated since the early weeks of 1987. The ACFC knew that a favourable ruling would underline the historical statement the Fransaskois were making and constitute a "confirmation de ce que nous avons toujours cru." The most important aspect of victory would be "le principe du bilinguisme, de la dualité canadienne."⁹⁶ In the event of success before the Supreme Court, the ACFC saw its primary goal as consolidating Fransaskois community support for negotiations on how bilingualism would be carried out; it should also "use the visibility and respectability of legal decisions" to reinforce the organization's political legitimacy within the province.⁹⁷ Moreover, "un jugement favorable, même s'il n'entraîne pas la livraison de services, pourrait donner une meilleure crédibilité à notre cause, raviver l'espoir chez les Francophones, donner lieu à une démonstration de solidarité."⁹⁸ Given this perspective, the ACFC's principal strategy was reaching out to the various Fransaskois communities across the province in order to ensure that they knew about the case and to build consensus surrounding its outcome. Secondly, a media strategy would work to minimize backlash amongst the anglophone population and ensure that people knew about the Fransaskois. As it had since 1981, the ACFC would assume leadership on behalf of the Fransaskois in lobbying and applying political pressure on the provincial and federal governments.⁹⁹

The rapidity of events following the *Mercure* decision meant that the ACFC, ACFA, and FFHQ would have to move quickly as well. They opted to directly call on the government to act

⁹⁶ ACFC, "Rencontre pour examiner les scénarios possibles relativement à la décision prochaine de la Cour suprême dans la cause *Mercure*," 7 novembre 1987. *[[PAA]]*], PR0015.0011, Box 5, 92.31.

⁹⁷ ACFC, "Direction politique. Planification 1987-1988," 27 janvier 1987. *[[PAA]]*], PR1995.410.986. My translation.

⁹⁸ ACFC, "Rencontre sur les cas juridiques tenue au Centre d'études bilingues, Université de Régina," 25 avril 1987. *[[PAA]]*], PR1995.410.986.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

and make Saskatchewan officially bilingual.¹⁰⁰ In a letter to Grant Devine, ACFC President Rupert Baudais explained that *Mercure* simply confirmed what the Fransaskois knew all along: that bilingualism had historical roots in western Canada. As such, Baudais wrote, Saskatchewan should confirm official bilingualism by appropriate legislation, especially given that the federal government was trying to have the provinces ratify the Meech Lake Accord.¹⁰¹ Baudais also understood the major legal and national implications of the decision and sensed the danger for his community:

The Supreme Court ruling confirms that from the very beginning of settlement in this area of the country, french speaking citizens had access, in their own language, to the major public institutions existing at the time. It is possible, from a strictly legalistic point of view, for the province to modify these rights unilaterally. However, to do so, would be tantamount to the province turning its back on the bilingual nature of Canada and to ignore the evolution of the nation. Such a step would deny the Fransaskois access, at a fundamental level, to their provincial government. It would also block the future development of a proper relationship between the provincial government and citizens of both official languages. Diminishing the rights recognized by the Supreme Court, would also land very little credibility to the Saskatchewan's signature to the Meech Lake Accord. The Accord contains a commitment to preserve and protect official minorities in every province.¹⁰²

A week later, still trying to ensure that the Fransaskois perspective was heard, the ACFC submitted a draft bill in both French and English to the provincial government.¹⁰³ The bill's preamble called for the government to recognise "the cultural heritage of Francophones in Saskatchewan" and official bilingualism in the legislature and the courts. It also called for the

¹⁰⁰ ACFC, "Proposition pour une position de l'A.C.F.C. concernant l'application de l'article 110," 17 March 1988. [PAA], (ACFA Fonds), vol. 410.

¹⁰¹ Rupert Baudais to Devine, 16 March 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ The Bill was written by ACFC legal counsel, Michel Bastarache. Michel Bastarache à Rupert Baudais, 22 mars 1988. [PAA], PR1996.416, Box 30 vol. 480. Bastarache later went on to represent the ACFA in the *Mahé* affair; Bastarache was also appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1997.

creation of an "Office responsible for Francophone affairs."¹⁰⁴ In order to avoid the acrimony over statute translation which caused a political crisis in Manitoba only a few years earlier in 1983-1984, the draft bill included an escape clause:

All Acts adopted prior to 1988, are confirmed and continue to have force and the same effects as though they had been originally adopted in English and in French.¹⁰⁵

The draft bill also gave the province a five-year limit to translate all of the province's laws still in force rather than provide for a blanket legislative bilingualism.¹⁰⁶ It was a compromise. The Fransaskois were not demanding that all of the province's laws be translated immediately, but that official bilingualism begin as of 1993. Translating statutes was less important than offering French-language services. The ACFC hoped that any funds saved from not having to translate every law could be put towards the establishment of provincial government services aimed specifically at the francophone population.¹⁰⁷

Not knowing precisely how the government planned on tackling the language question and the *Mercure* decision, the ACFC requested a meeting with Devine to discuss the ACFC draft bill. Devine agreed. But the meeting between Minister of Justice and Attorney General Bob Andrew and the ACFC executive was a failure. To the dismay of the Fransaskois, Andrew gave the impression, according to Baudais, that the "government intends to effectively abolish all French language rights with respect to legislation, subject to reintroduction of a few bills in both

¹⁰⁴ ACFC, "Proposed Bill Submitted on March 23, 1988 to the Government of Saskatchewan by L'ACFC re: The Use of the French Language in the Legislature and in the Courts of Justice of Saskatchewan." [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* Interestingly, a similar clause eventually made it into the government's Bill and became law.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ ACFC, "Rencontre pour examiner les scénarios possibles relativement à la décision prochaine de la Cour suprême dans la cause *Mercure*," 7 novembre 1987. [PAA], PR0015.0011, Box 5, 92.31.

languages...Your present intentions, as outlined by us, are squarely inconsistent with the equal status of French and English recognized by the Supreme Court ruling."¹⁰⁸

Walking Into Bilingualism? The Debate Over French and Bill 2

The government's intentions became clearer on 4 April 1988 when Bob Andrew introduced Bill 2, *An Act respecting the Use of the English and French Languages in Saskatchewan* in the Legislature. It was full of ironies and contradictions. It needed to be enacted in both English and French in order to be valid, even though it was repealing the bilingual requirement laid out in the 1877 statute. It also made no declaration on the province's official language. Laws could be enacted in English only, or in both English and French, but never in French only.¹⁰⁹ In laws that were designated as bilingual, the French and English versions had equal authority. Power to designate any law bilingual was vested in the Lieutenant Governor in Council rather than the Legislature. Bill 2 also provided for the use of English or French before the provincial courts and in debates of the Assembly, but declared that rules and procedures of the Assembly, in addition to *Hansard*, could be published in English only or in both English and French. Finally, and most importantly, it repealed s. 110 of the *North-West Territories Act*.¹¹⁰

The key goal of the proposed legislation was evident in section 3, which declared that all of Saskatchewan's pre-1988 laws were valid even though they were enacted and printed in English only. This move not only removed any doubt as to the validity of the province's laws, but

¹⁰⁸ Baudais to Andrew, 29 March 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds; Baudais to Devine, 29 March 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

¹⁰⁹ Saskatchewan, Bill 2: *An Act respecting the Use of the English and French Languages in Saskatchewan*. [PAS], Legislature of Saskatchewan Fonds, s. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, s. 12.

also avoided the type of crisis that plagued Manitoba from 1979 to 1984.¹¹¹ Shoring up the English-only character of Saskatchewan's government and laws was crucial.

Bill 2 made few concessions to official bilingualism, which was no small feat given the political climate surrounding the Meech Lake Accord. Bill 2 made no effort to overturn the cumulative effects of decades of non-compliance with official bilingualism in government institutions. It affirmed the dominance of English and allowed the status quo to continue. It repealed the federal statute which made bilingualism compulsory in the province. All of these factors made it popular with English Canadians fed up with hearing about national unity, bilingualism, and the demands of French Canada. In Saskatchewan, Devine could show the majority of the population that he was getting tough with the French Canadians and ensure that he did not lose votes.

On the other hand, the limited provisions providing for official bilingualism allowed the provincial government to portray the law as a positive step towards provincial bilingualism. With Bill 2 came a full-on public relations campaign which cast it as balancing national unity, Canada's bilingual character, and the different political culture of western Canada. It was a "middle ground" that Devine's government sought. In a press release dated 4 April 1988, the Saskatchewan government justified the act as a "balanced and pragmatic response to the *Mercure* decision" which dealt with French-language rights "in a manner that is both fair and responsible."¹¹²

Bill 2 set off a furor in provincial and national politics and divided province and country yet again over language. Letters of support poured in from across Canada to Premier Devine's

¹¹¹ See Hébert, *Manitoba's French-Language Crisis*. Manitoba was also a concern for the government of Alberta which noted the costs of the "Manitoba Experience with Bilingualism" and the potential fallout over its own response to *Mercure* if the government took a position that was too open towards the francophones. Alberta, "The *Mercure* Decision - Implications and Options for Alberta," 2 March 1988. [PAA], PR1995.0445/172 vol. I, Box 11.

¹¹² Saskatchewan, "Press Release - New Language Act in Saskatchewan." [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

office, many of them congratulating him for "standing up to Ottawa" and "doing the right thing for English-speaking Canada."¹¹³ The note from Jack Scowen, a Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament, was representative of this support:

Congratulations and best wishes on the stand your government took on Bill 2. Your position reflects the thinking not only of the people in the province of Saskatchewan, but across this country. I am hopeful that other provinces will follow Saskatchewan's lead. My support for you is there and please do not hesitate to contact me should I be able to assist you in any way. Your Bill is in full accord with the federal Bill C-72, referring to significant demand.¹¹⁴

In Saskatchewan, Devine was viewed as drawing a line on an important issue. Outside of the province he was the champion of English Canada, of the principle of majority rule and democracy.¹¹⁵ Devine's stance on bill 2 quickly gained him the image of a politician with courage, with the guts to stand up to the nonsense of official bilingualism.

¹¹³ The D. Grant Devine Fonds at Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan features over a metre of correspondence related to Bill 2. Much of it consists of letters of support to the Premier for his actions.

¹¹⁴ Scowen to Devine, 6 April 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds. Scowen's stance on Bill 2 showed the extent to which the language question was polarizing; he and fellow PC Member of Parliament Ron Stewart even broke with party ranks and opposed Mulroney's involvement in resolving the crisis. See Don McGillivray, "Party dissidents shake leaders," *Windsor Star*, 11 April 1988, A6.

¹¹⁵ Ron Stewart, member for Simcoe South (Ontario), congratulated Devine for "not allowing a mere 23,000 in a population of over 1 million to push him around." Joel Ruimy, "2 MPs break with Mulroney, back Devine on French issue," *Toronto Star*, 12 April 1988, A11.



Brian Gable, "Evolution of Minority Language Rights." *Globe and Mail*, 6 April 1988. The *Globe* criticized Devine's position on language rights in Saskatchewan and published several caricatures on the topic throughout the week.

Bill 2, however, was also a political thorn in Devine's side. It was difficult for people not to see the law for what it really was: a restriction of official bilingualism in the province. The President of La Société Franco-Manitobaine, Lucille Blanchette, denounced the law as similar to what the Manitoba government did to its francophone population in 1890.¹¹⁶ The FFHQ called it "une insulte aux Fransaskois et aux francophones de l'extérieur du Québec puisqu'il ne respecte pas le minimum de l'engagement constitutionnel et moral pris par le gouvernement de la Saskatchewan dans l'Accord du Lac Meech."¹¹⁷ The Fransaskois community panned the bill. In a communiqué released the same day it was tabled, the ACFC noted that the Fransaskois were "truly humiliated" and called the legislation a denial of rights:

¹¹⁶ Geoffrey York, "Bill to limit francophone rights echoes history," *Globe and Mail*, 7 April 1988, A9. See also Manitoba, *Official Language Act*.

¹¹⁷ FFHQ, Communiqué, 5 avril 1988. [PAA], PR1996.416, Box 30, vol. 480.

Le gouvernement conservateur de la Saskatchewan abolit le français dans cette province, un droit vieux de 102 ans. L'Honorable Grant Devine, un des principaux architectes de l'Accord du Lac Meech et chef du premier gouvernement anglophone à le ratifier, vient aujourd'hui d'en trahir les principes mêmes.¹¹⁸

Rupert Baudais was furious: "Ce projet de loi est une insulte, flagrante, non seulement aux Fransaskois, mais à tous les francophones du pays, parce qu'on nous traite comme si on n'existait pas."¹¹⁹ Devine simply replied that "I think that the Francophone community might want more, faster."¹²⁰ Bob Andrew took the lower road, publicly calling Baudais' criticisms "dishonest," "foolish," and "driven by the fact that he's a Liberal."¹²¹

The Saskatchewan government's legislation also annoyed the federal government. Official Languages Commissioner D'Iberville Fortier argued that its adoption would be "un triste jour dans l'histoire du Canada parce qu'après tant d'années d'attente, ce projet n'assure toujours pas la pleine égalité de statut du français et de l'anglais en ce qui a trait au processus législatif."¹²² Mulroney wrote to Devine to remind him that

...the issues raised in the Supreme Court decision go well beyond the borders of Saskatchewan. They have implications for all provinces. Indeed, they go to the essence of the Canadian federation...The Language Bill which your government has recently tabled may, of course, be viewed from two different perspectives. It may be seen as a first step towards the implementation of long-neglected rights and guarantees...Taking the other perspective, however, the proposed Saskatchewan Language Bill diminishes existing legal rights...in the absence of guarantees that all laws and regulations of public importance will be adopted in both languages, your government's response is perceived by many Canadians as constituting a reduction of existing rights...we were disappointed and would have preferred if your government had done more, more quickly.¹²³

¹¹⁸ ACFC, Communiqué, 4 avril 1988. [PAA], PR1996.416, Box 30, vol. 480.

¹¹⁹ Radio-Canada, "Grant Devine déçoit les Fransaskois," 4 avril 1988, *Archives de Radio-Canada* http://archives.radio-canada.ca/societe/langue_culture/clips/12284/. Consulted 27 April 2015.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Geoffrey York, "Minister assails francophone leader," *Globe and Mail*, 6 April 1988, A5.

¹²² Canada, Official Languages Commissioner, "Déclaration du Commissaire aux langues officielles sur les droits linguistiques en Saskatchewan," 5 avril 1988. [PAA], PR1996.416, Box 30, vol. 480.

¹²³ Mulroney to Devine, 8 April 1988. Wilfrid Denis, private collection. The letter was immediately made public by the Office of the Prime Minister in a press release dated the same day.

In Saskatchewan the Opposition parties lambasted Devine and his government's handling of the *Mercure* decision. NDP Leader Roy Romanow argued that Bill 2 had national implications and could be a violation of the Meech Lake Accord. He also slammed the government's lack of consultation with the francophone community and the federal government.¹²⁴ Devine replied that Bill 2 actually gave francophones in Saskatchewan more rights than they enjoyed previously and that the government's position was reasonable and moderate:

...the legislation does precisely what we wanted it to do as a result of the Meech Lake accord. With the *Mercure* decision you had three alternatives. You could say no to everything; or you could say yes, it's all going to be bilingual all at the same time all today, and rewrite the past; or you can do something in the middle that will give us time to get it done...Now you can't have it all French, all at once, right now, because it's virtually and physically impossible. We cannot do that...This is a bilingual country. We accept that. But in Saskatchewan we have to walk into that.¹²⁵

Saskatchewan was going to move towards official bilingualism at its own pace and on its own terms. For Devine, it was important to be as clear as possible on this question, to use it as an opportunity to show the limits of federal power. While Canada was explicitly recognized by Devine as a bilingual country, this definition of the country was not entirely applicable to the West. Saskatchewan had to find its own solution which fit with how the region identified itself and its history. It was possible that bilingualism could work in the West, but it would have to be defined and laid out by westerners, not by Ottawa. It certainly could not be imposed by an old 1877 federal statute leftover from the territorial days. That method of achieving bilingualism, which was the centrepiece of Fransaskois historical memory and political activism, was precisely the sort of thing that enraged western Canadians.

¹²⁴ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 21st Legislature, vol. 31, 321-322 (5 April, 1988).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 322-323.

Devine's comments during the Bill 2 debate were representative of the unilingual interpretation of Saskatchewan history. Devine presented official bilingualism as a historical aberration, as a policy out of sync with the character and history of the province. To be fully bilingual, to make French an official language in provincial institutions, would be tantamount to rewriting history. It would mean denying the history of the West as many western Canadians understood it. The history of western Canada was not one of bilingualism, but of pluralism and an agreed-upon assimilation to the English language.¹²⁶ The francophones, a small minority group, were not an exception to this rule. They could not simply "re-write history" according to their own interpretation of the region and country. In the same vein, Devine noted that Saskatchewan would have to proceed slowly with bilingualism given the province's political, cultural, and historical character. The small francophone minority population simply did not justify a quick move towards bilingualism, if any move at all in that direction.¹²⁷

Alberta took a similar approach to dealing with *Mercure*, following the lead of Saskatchewan as it had throughout the process following the Supreme Court decision in February. Three days after Bill 2 was tabled in the Saskatchewan legislature, Alberta Attorney General Jim Horsman announced that the province would cooperate with the federal government on bilingualism but "laws affecting Alberta will be made by Alberta legislators."¹²⁸ Horsman also admitted that Saskatchewan and Alberta had discussed how to approach the legislation and that Saskatchewan had offered its advice to Alberta on the best strategy for moving forward.¹²⁹ In the coming months before Alberta adopted its own language legislation, Saskatchewan would continue to advise the Albertan cabinet as to what actions to take and media strategies to

¹²⁶ Thorsell, "Has the West been won?," *op. cit.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Ashley Geddes, "We'll make own language law: Horsman," *Calgary Herald*, 7 April 1988.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

endorse. Copies of Saskatchewan's legislation were even sent to presidents of local Albertan Progressive Conservative associations.¹³⁰

Parliament debated taking action on Saskatchewan's legislation. The federal debate, however, took on a much different tone than the one occurring in Saskatchewan. In Parliament controversy over Bill 2 had little to do with constitutional history of western Canada and Saskatchewan; rather, it focused on its implications for national unity and the future of the Meech Lake Accord. Former Prime Minister John Turner, now Leader of the Opposition, called Bill 2 "a step backwards in terms of national unity."¹³¹ The real leader of opposition to bill 2 in Parliament, however, was Jean-Robert Gauthier. Member for Ottawa East, Gauthier was an experienced MP who had held office during the Trudeau years. He was the Liberal point man on official language issues. Gauthier characterised the Saskatchewan legislation as technically legal, but morally questionable. He also did not buy Devine's justification of the proposed legislation:

This action is legal, there is no doubt about that...But is it fair? We'll see...we should not overlook the fact that the Saskatchewan Legislature adopted a resolution stemming from the Meech Lake Accord...introducing Bill 2 to repeal Section 110 Saskatchewan reduces the basic rights. This is clearly a step backward and no step forward in that matter. This is clearly a setback for fundamental rights, the rights of access to the legislature and the courts in that province, in French and English. The irony here, Madam Speaker, is the wonderful rhetoric of the province saying that this Bill might not be the solution to this problem but it is a step in the right direction.¹³²

Rather than criticize Saskatchewan, the Mulroney government defended Devine. Mulroney was certainly in a difficult position as his main electoral support bases -- western Canada and Quebec -- were both sensitive to language and national unity issues. In the case of Bill 2 it was easier for Mulroney to allow Devine to repeal bilingualism rather than denounce him. Repealing bilingualism was a popular move in western Canada. Even Quebec did not oppose it since that

¹³⁰ Bob Andrew to B.C. Doell, 2 August 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

¹³¹ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 11 April 1988.

¹³² *Ibid.*

province was also trying to assert more power over official languages within its provincial borders. Moreover, Devine was one of Mulroney's strongest supporters on a number of thorny regional-national questions since 1984.¹³³

Mulroney's response to Bill 2 also fit with the government's overall view that provinces held exclusive jurisdiction over language use in provincial institutions. When Gauthier asked what the federal government was going to do about official bilingualism in Saskatchewan, Minister of Justice Ray Hnatyshyn argued that it was a question of provincial jurisdiction.¹³⁴ Hnatyshyn even gave credit to Devine for making "a very important statement with respect to the position he sees for Saskatchewan" and for "moving toward Saskatchewan becoming a part of a bilingual Canada."¹³⁵ Mulroney himself took up the Saskatchewan discourse: "Premier Devine has set out his wish that Saskatchewan become bilingual. I think it is an important step forward for Canada that a Premier of a western province make that statement."¹³⁶

As Parliament debated the national implications of Bill 2, Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa began a scheduled three-province tour of western Canada. Like Mulroney, Bourassa was also a strong proponent of the provincial approach to language rights defended by Devine and Alberta Premier Don Getty. Before his meetings with Getty and Devine, Bourassa noted publicly that he had no intention in interfering with Saskatchewan or Alberta over their impending language legislation: "I don't think I would be justified in interfering in the powers of other provincial jurisdictions, just as I hope that, in Quebec, we can take care of our problems on

¹³³ This collaboration should not be too surprising since Devine and Mulroney enjoyed a fairly close political relationship since Mulroney's election in 1984. Devine even declined to criticize Mulroney on a number of key western alienation issues such as the CF-18 contract, agricultural subsidies, and oil taxes. See Geoffrey York, "Ever loyal, Devine stands by his PM," *Globe and Mail*, 21 December 1987, A5. See also James Pitsula and Ken Rasmussen, *Privatizing a Province: The New Right in Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990), 16-17.

¹³⁴ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 15 April 1988.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 April 1988.

our own."¹³⁷ Expanding on this idea in a more boisterous manner, Getty affirmed that "We don't want Mr. Bourassa telling us how to deal with the French language issue in Alberta and we don't try and tell him how to deal with it in Quebec."¹³⁸

Saskatchewan also remained confident that Bourassa would not pose too great a problem. Devine's team advised him to hold his ground by telling Bourassa that "Saskatchewan has acted fairly and reasonably in responding to Mercure...Bill 2 represents, in practical terms, genuine progress for francophones in Saskatchewan."¹³⁹ In any case, the brief continued, Bourassa could say or do little regarding the Saskatchewan approach since "...he will then leave himself vulnerable to criticisms regarding Quebec's treatment of its Anglophone minority."¹⁴⁰ As it turned out, the Saskatchewan government had little to worry about, as a few days earlier Bourassa had already called the Act "slight progress" for the province's francophones.¹⁴¹

Meanwhile, Mulroney continued to flip-flop on the Bill. He met with Rupert Baudais and Fransaskois representatives in Saskatoon but made no promises. Baudais, now desperate to stop Devine's government from enacting the legislation, wrote to Mulroney denouncing Devine's position on French-language rights in the province:

L'attitude du gouvernement de la Saskatchewan dans cette affaire a de quoi inquiéter tous les Canadiens soucieux du respect des droits des minorités. D'une part, vos propres démarches de même que la grande flexibilité que nous avons démontrée dans notre position se sont heurtées à un refus catégorique de modifier un tant soit peu ce projet de loi qui abolit les droits qui existent depuis 102 ans. D'autre part, le Premier ministre de la Saskatchewan clame sa volonté de consacrer des dizaines, voir même des centaines de millions de dollars, à la promotion du bilinguisme.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Robert McKenzie, "West's French not my affair Bourassa says," *Toronto Star*, 12 April 1988.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ "Visit of Premier Robert Bourassa, April 13, 1988, Saskatoon Saskatchewan," [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ "Bourassa calls Saskatchewan bill 'slight progress' for francophones," *Montreal Gazette*, 9 April 1988, A11.

Bourassa also reiterated his foremost priority, which was respect for Quebec's jurisdiction over language: "As much as I am ready to discuss this question with my colleague, I want people to respect Quebec's jurisdiction over language. I don't want to interfere in the legislature of another province." *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Rupert Baudais à Brian Mulroney, 20 avril 1988. Wilfrid Denis, Papers.

Mulroney's answer would not come until several months later, well after Bill 2 passed into law.

English Confirmed: Adopting Bill 2

In Parliament, the Opposition continued to assail Prime Minister Mulroney and demand that he take a firm position denouncing Devine's plan. Mulroney refused on the grounds that members of the federal cabinet were busy negotiating how to increase access to French services and bilingualism in Saskatchewan with the provincial government. Jean-Robert Gauthier replied that "the Fransaskois who were here today told us they were not involved in current talks between the federal government and Saskatchewan. They felt left out of negotiations that, after all, concern their fundamental rights and their future."¹⁴³ The government made no promises however, replying simply that "We think it is important that we have the Association's point of view as we discuss the matter with the Province of Saskatchewan."¹⁴⁴

With the nation's eyes on Saskatchewan, Bob Andrew moved second reading of Bill 2 on 21 April 1988. His speech attempted to justify why the province would adopt the legislation without amendments. His remarks were more an attempt to justify the province's unilingual political culture rather than a genuine attempt to create a "bilingual" Saskatchewan. Andrew began by arguing that during Parliamentary debate over the Saskatchewan and Alberta autonomy bills in 1905, Canada decided not to adopt a clause similar to section 23 of the *Manitoba Act*.¹⁴⁵ The fact that even Sir Wilfrid Laurier did not justify the use of French in the provinces, Andrew argued, demonstrated that French was not a constitutional right in Saskatchewan. He noted, "I

¹⁴³ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 20 April 1988.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 21st Legislature, vol. 31, 736 (21 April, 1988).

believe [it] to be a very significant and important historical fact."¹⁴⁶ For Andrew, the symbolism of western Canadian history mattered: Saskatchewan was not meant to be bilingual and never was. Bilingualism did not fit the character of the province or region, and even if it did, the provinces were given the final word on whether or not they would embrace it. It was a fitting historical interpretation and legislative justification for unilingualism in a region suspicious of Ottawa and convinced of its historical mistreatment by central Canada.

In Andrew's view, the history of Saskatchewan also justified the new legislation because French was never very present in the province in the first place. French fell so far into disuse in Saskatchewan and was so insignificant in the province, Andrew noted, that the Legislature had not even bothered to debate it up until the *Mercure* decision in 1988. There was little question as to what the province's real official language was during Saskatchewan's earliest years: "Mr. Speaker, there is and can be no doubt that it was assumed by all concerned, or virtually all concerned, that English was the functioning language."¹⁴⁷ Even if the Territories were bilingual before 1905, fundamental changes brought by immigration at the turn of the twentieth century justified the denial of exclusive rights to francophones. Bilingualism did not work for Saskatchewan because

...different provinces provide different bilingual dimensions to their respective provinces. The services the bilingual dimension has provided in Quebec is different to what is provided in British Columbia. What is provided in New Brunswick is different to what is provided in Nova Scotia. What is provided in Manitoba is different to what is provided in Alberta. And, Mr. Speaker, there's reason for that, and we must recognize that as a reality of this country. There are both constitutional reasons, and there are population reasons, and there are historical reasons as to why that is a fact.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 738.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 739.

Interpreted this way, official bilingualism had its limits and the language rights given to the Fransaskois in Bill 2 were limited by the history of the region. Interestingly, the multiculturalism and immigration argument were used to justify the status quo of English as reigning official language. Diversity required management on a policy level. On a philosophical level, it also implied that no single minority ethnic group could be elevated above another. The prairie compact -- the very idea of living in isolation on the frontier, in difficult social, economic, and climactic conditions -- required assimilation to one language in order for society to function.¹⁴⁹ Andrew argued that even the Fransaskois had never bothered to raise the language question in the legislature:

...look at the last 83 years of history in this province where many people of francophone ancestry represented seats in this Assembly and held positions of authority in this legislature during times when the language issue was far more heated than it is today. Not once was that matter raised. Not once was the idea debated in this Assembly. And that, Mr. Speaker, tells me something about the custom and the tradition and the history of this Assembly.¹⁵⁰

It was a bold statement even for Andrew, who had already publicly attacked the chief political representative of francophones in the province. It was also untrue. On a number of occasions in the early political history of Saskatchewan, the place of the French language in Saskatchewan society had been debated in the legislature.¹⁵¹ At this level of analysis, however, it is less important to insist on the historical accuracy of Andrew's comments than on the implication of his argument. English, Andrew asserted, was the unquestioned official language of the province by the "custom and the tradition and the history of the Assembly."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ William Thorsell, "Has the West been won?," *Language and Society* 16 (September 1985), 21-23.

¹⁵⁰ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 21st Legislature, vol. 31, 815 (25 April, 1988).

¹⁵¹ See chapter two.

¹⁵² Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 21st Legislature, vol. 31, 815 (25 April, 1988).

Not everyone accepted this interpretation of Saskatchewan's history. The predominance of English, the myth of unilingualism, also had to compete with other myths in Saskatchewan political culture. The province's official opposition, for example, did not object to the legislation or Andrew's speech on the grounds that they were anti-French or anti-bilingualism, but rather that they were anti-diversity. NDP member Ned Shillington characterized Andrew's speech as

occasionally bordering on an accurate interpretation, but not often. Out of his lengthy discussion of the Saskatchewan history, he drew the conclusion that English had become the language of this province; that is, Saskatchewan's language, and he drew the conclusion that this province is a unilingual English province. And that's the conclusion he drew from his view of Saskatchewan's history. Mr. Speaker, that is not, I think, an accurate rendition of Saskatchewan's history, and that is not Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, as is the case with much of Canada, is a multicultural province. We have people from all lands, each of whom have made their contributions...¹⁵³

In Shillington's view, the error of Bill 2 was to ignore multiculturalism and the importance that the francophone community placed on language. Shillington objected less to repealing French-language rights than to not making positive steps towards minority language rights for all ethnic groups. Official bilingualism in Saskatchewan, Shillington believed, was a step in the right direction for all minorities in the province. The francophones were like any other non-English ethnic group in Saskatchewan trying to preserve their culture. What Shillington found stunning with Bill 2 was the government's lack of consultation with the francophones and other minority communities seeking to preserve their cultures.¹⁵⁴ In other words, the problem with Bill 2 was not that it repealed French-language rights in Saskatchewan, but rather that it failed to recognize and support multiculturalism in the province:

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 21 April, 1988, 741.

¹⁵⁴ "This Bill, Mr. Speaker, does not resolve the rights and needs of the francophone community, and it doesn't resolve the needs of the other cultural communities in this province. The government opposite has talked about making Saskatchewan bilingual in law...given this government's treatment of minorities, I doubt any minority wants their rights to depend on the whim of this cabinet." *Ibid.*, 741-742.

...the minister spoke about a bilingual Canada and a unilingual Saskatchewan. He spoke of Saskatchewan's history as though the only culture, the only language, the only reality, had always been English, and English alone. But I submit to you, the minister's view is at variance with the multicultural heritage and the multicultural history of Saskatchewan. His view is at variance with the multicultural nature of Saskatchewan today, for that view fails to acknowledge the hundreds of thousands of men and women of wide and varying ethnic backgrounds who came from the four corners of the globe to settle Saskatchewan, and who have contributed so much to this province.¹⁵⁵

The Fransaskois community was not particularly fond of this argument because it conflicted with its historical interpretation of the region and reduced them to simply another "ethnic group". Shillington meant well but the Fransaskois certainly did not believe that the road to full, official bilingualism was through multiculturalism. If multiculturalism justified English as the province's sole official language, as Andrew implied during the part of his speech on immigration, then there was some doubt as to whether multiculturalism could also justify bilingualism as Shillington was trying to argue.

Saskatchewan Liberal leader Ralph Goodale's criticism of the Bill emphasized its national implications rather than its direct impact on the Fransaskois community. This argument was more to the liking of the francophones as they also used the national unity angle in order to further their opposition to the bill. In a memorandum sent to all Saskatchewan MLAs, for example, the ACFC reminded members of the national controversy that Devine's government was stirring up:

We, the Fransaskois, wish to bring to your attention the reaction of many Saskatchewan and Canadian citizens, politicians and press members, which clearly indicates their opinion that Bill 2 (which you are presently addressing in the legislature) does not respect the spirit of the Meech Lake Accord nor the hopes or expectations of the Canadian population as a whole...It must be amended so as to better respect the rights of the Fransaskois as stated in article 110 of the North West Territories Act as well as to foresee an administrative structure which

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 April 1988, 809.

reflects the official bilingualism of Canada and which would guarantee minimum services and reasonable time limits.¹⁵⁶

Goodale took a similar approach and panned the government for failing to live up to its commitments under the Meech Lake Accord. Like Shillington, Goodale also believed that the proposed legislation failed to "pay attention to our multicultural heritage, to the deep roots in our province of a wide variety of ethnic and cultural groupings."¹⁵⁷ Goodale argued in favour of the "bilingualism within a multicultural framework" narrative, explaining that "it should still be possible to respect minority language rights in Saskatchewan" in addition to "the realities of what makes up Saskatchewan's population mixture."¹⁵⁸ But could the two be reconciled?

The government's reply to its critics was that education was the best pathway towards official bilingualism. Translating statutes into French was not useful to the francophone minority, nor was it financially or politically feasible. Canora MLA Lorne Kopelchuk argued that the growth of French immersion and some services in French showed respect for official bilingualism, the law, and the Meech Lake Accord.¹⁵⁹ Again, however, it was a certain idea of the history of Saskatchewan that drove the debate. Bill 2, Kopelchuck explained, was about more than respecting the francophones' wishes. It was also about recognizing all minorities and ensuring that the reality of Saskatchewan history and politics was not forgotten. Canada was a bilingual country but that idea was problematic in Saskatchewan. If Canada was bilingual, it was also multicultural, and Saskatchewan was living proof of this reality:

As a Ukrainian Canadian I recognize, accept, and endorse the fact that Canada is a bilingual nation. I am also grateful that the constitution of our country recognizes that we are also a multicultural nation. Due respect is to be paid the Ukrainians,

¹⁵⁶ ACFC to All Saskatchewan MLAs, "RE: Bill 2: An Act Respecting the Use of the English and French Languages in Saskatchewan," 12 April 1988. [PAS], D. Grant Devine Fonds.

¹⁵⁷ Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, 2nd Session, 21st Legislature, vol. 31, 810 (25 April, 1988).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 812.

the Germans, the Italians, indeed all of our ethnic minorities...every person in this Assembly must recognize that while this nation is bilingual, in practice very few of our people speak French...But let it be done as it has been done with the French language education; let it be done without compulsion, without loud vitriol; let it be done in a measured, managed way, and we will achieve greater successes.¹⁶⁰

Kopelchuk's remarks demonstrated how multiculturalism could be applied to support a variety of perspectives in favour of or against one sole official language. Shillington used multiculturalism to undermine the government's assumption of the supremacy of English, while Goodale used it in order to criticize the government's lack of openness to official languages and minority language rights. Both Bob Andrew and Lorne Kopelchuck appealed to multiculturalism to remind the Opposition that in their view, the francophones were getting more than they deserved as one of Saskatchewan's many ethnic groups.

Bill 2 passed without amendments and received royal assent the following day on April 26.¹⁶¹ It was the end of section 110 in Saskatchewan, of the old North-West's hold on the political character of the new Saskatchewan. But like the *Mercure* case, Bill 2 was about much more than establishing language policy or deciding what laws would be translated. It was about questions that struck at the very heart of Saskatchewan's political community. What is the history of Saskatchewan? How should that history be recognized? What is Saskatchewan? Is it English? Is it bilingual? Is it multicultural? Who ought to decide? Bill 2 demonstrated that the francophone interpretation of western Canadian history was simply unacceptable to political leaders in the region, in addition to many members of the general public. As the *Prairie Messenger* noted in a scathing editorial,

The difficulty lies not with political parties but with the narrowmindedness of Saskatchewan people. We refuse to see the value of official bilingualism. We refuse to see it in terms other than dollars and cents. And, of course, in cold economic terms it is a waste of money to translate our laws -- nobody reads them

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 813.

¹⁶¹ "Proclamation," *Saskatchewan Gazette*, Part I, vol. 84, no. 18, Tuesday April 26 1988.

in one language, let alone two. But our nation is built not on economics but on the pledge of two cultures understanding and accepting each other -- a pledge which should make us sensitive to the needs of minorities...If we proclaim that the French culture has a central place in our land, we must be ready to give the French language an official position in our government.¹⁶²

But it was not to be. The government had spoken on the issue, and it was done. French was no longer an official language in the Saskatchewan legislature, courts, and legislation.

Conclusion

The *Mercure* case and the debate over Bill 2 demonstrate the competing visions of western Canada and western Canadian history. The Fransaskois community and the Saskatchewan government sought to legitimize their respective visions of contemporary language rights in the region through antagonistic historical-legal arguments. These visions of history, had major implications for the outcome of the *Mercure* case but also for language policy in Saskatchewan during the 1980s. Presented with a choice by the Supreme Court, both Saskatchewan and Alberta chose to repeal section 110 rather than perpetuate it.

The Fransaskois interpretation of official bilingualism in the past and present dovetailed well with the contemporary national thrust towards official languages and a "two nations" definition of Canada under the Trudeau and Mulroney governments. Many people in Saskatchewan, including provincial political leaders, found this definition of western Canadian history and contemporary Canada to be completely unacceptable. The history of the West was not one that echoed the antagonistic French-English conflict that so characterized central Canada's past. The West was different, and westerners resented the implication that they were simply another version of Ontario, or simply another version of Ontario and Quebec. The West had been settled over time by people from all over the world, including French Canadians; no

¹⁶² "The rights of the Fransaskois," *Prairie Messenger*, 18 April 1988.

minority group could be seen as above one another because the western Canadian vision was one of equality and partnership in building the "new nation." Biculturalism simply did not apply in either historical or contemporary terms, as English remained the unquestioned official language of Saskatchewan.

CONCLUSION

Fragment and Frontier, Continuity and Change: Pathways of Community, Language, and Politics

Does the history of bilingualism, the Fransaskois, and the French language in Saskatchewan matter? Based on the findings of this dissertation, the answer is a definitive "yes." As one famous Canadian historian observed, the French language question in western Canada was "as prolonged and bitter as anything in Canadian history."¹ From the early territorial days, when western Canada and Saskatchewan began debating the nature of regional society, the "dual language" question mattered. It coloured the creation of Manitoba in 1870. It infiltrated territorial politics after the 1885 rebellion and was the first priority of territorial political leaders when the Legislative assembly of the North-West Territories met for the first time in 1888. It exploded into a national crisis in 1905 when Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, then Conservative member of Parliament Frederick Monk, tried to have separate schools and the French language fully protected in the Saskatchewan constitution. It cast a shadow over early Saskatchewan politics from 1905 until the 1930s, when J.T.M. Anderson's government made French language education illegal. It polarized and divided neighbours and citizens between 1970 and 1990 as the province debated opening the education system to more French instruction. It was one of the vexatious issues in Saskatchewan politics between 1971 and 1982. The challenges of bilingualism in Saskatchewan were finally realized with the *Mercure* case between 1980 and 1988, when the provincial government had every chance to affirm French as an official language -- most notably, a favourable federal government environment for official languages and a Supreme Court decision confirming the francophones' arguments -- but stubbornly refused.

Yet, toward the end of the twentieth century, the Fransaskois could look back on the past twenty years with pride. They scored a major victory before the Supreme Court of Canada in the

¹ Donald Creighton, *Towards the Discovery of Canada: Selected Essays* (Toronto, Macmillan, 1972), 82.

Mercurie decision. They were busy establishing the province's first francophone schools in what would soon be a francophone-run school system. They proved to the provincial government that the Fransaskois vision of Saskatchewan history and society could not be ignored by the English-speaking majority, even if francophones represented a small portion of the province's population.

The Fransaskois could also look back upon the 1968 to 1990 period as one of struggle and bitter defeat. The Saskatchewan government's multicultural definition of the province, politically and historically unacceptable to the Fransaskois, was popular. The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Mercurie* confirmed French as an official language in Saskatchewan, but also allowed the province the opportunity to repeal it. French-language education was a tiresome quest which pitted francophones against the government and school boards. To this day, the community continues to argue with the government over adequate funding to francophone education, alleging that since the inception of the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises (CEF) in 1995, the Fransaskois education system has never received adequate funding from the province.

Why did the French-language question persist in Saskatchewan politics? What made it important from day one? Here the power of separate visions of political community, of competing memories, must be taken into account. Within reason, governments can do whatever they want. The Westminster parliamentary system tends to centralize power within the Executive, vesting wide powers in premiers, prime ministers, and cabinet ministers. But government and politics are not everything, and in the case of the Fransaskois, even a small community with few political and economic resources can make its voice heard. Language is about much more than who may speak what in the legislature, about what history is taught in schools, or about who controls a school system. These parts of the French-language question are merely the visible elements of a deeper nexus of history, symbolism, meaning, memory, and

political community. The French-language question in Saskatchewan goes to the core of the history and values of the Saskatchewan political community.

Ideas and beliefs do not appear or disappear overnight. Nor do they remain the same after major battles or conflicts. People learn from the past and from their mistakes; they can forget, but they also remember. The ideas and beliefs from the formative period of Saskatchewan history helped to determine the outcomes of language politics between 1968 and 1990. The 1870-1930 era created, then nurtured, the idea that official bilingualism went against the desired definition of the region. What made western Canada different, at least in the minds of many early Saskatchewan political leaders, was that it would leave behind the never-ending struggles between French and English-speakers. Later between 1968 and 1990, while different Saskatchewan provincial governments were not openly "anti-French" in the way they carried out language and cultural policies, they remained firm in their resolve that official bilingualism simply did not correspond with the western Canadian identity. In other words, the early years of Saskatchewan history developed a "political pathway" for the language question. Subsequent provincial governments, owing to the weight of history, legislation, and cultural values, remained dependent on the path forged decades earlier. The formative period of western Canadian history, including that of Saskatchewan's first three decades as a province, trended strongly towards linguistic and cultural conformity. Assimilation to the English language and British values were central to the ideal political community in Saskatchewan between 1870 and 1931. This drive to create a British West did not singularly affect francophones, as many other minority groups -- Germans, Ukrainians, Doukhobors, for example -- suffered discrimination against their languages and cultures. But the francophones were a different kind of threat, a most urgent one. Not only did francophones desire to keep their language and culture, they also represented

another idea of Canada, one that was well articulated by some French-Canadian political leaders. The francophones reminded British Canadian political leaders of the influence of Quebec in national political matters, and of the power struggles between the federal government and the West. According to the Anglo-Canadian view, Ottawa, for example, imposed bilingualism on the North-West Territories; it also imposed separate schools on the young Saskatchewan. In both cases, the francophones and their compatriots in Quebec were to blame. The solution was stronger provinces, greater autonomy, and less Ottawa.

Later, between 1968 and 1990, western anger over Quebec's influence in federal politics and the singular dominance of the language question on the federal stage led, among other things, not only to the demise of the Liberal party in the region, but also a great deal of difficulties on official bilingualism. As well-intentioned as provincial governments might have been between 1968 and 1990, bureaucratic inertia, cultural baggage from the past, and majority opposition to bilingualism made measures to expand French education and services difficult. Of course, it helped little that the Saskatchewan government demonstrated open hostility to Ottawa's cultural policies, opting instead to adopt its own understanding of western Canadian history.

Path dependency and continuity of a unilingual English political community is one of the themes of this study. Another is the persistence of the French-Canadian memory of a bilingual western Canada. If during the early period of Saskatchewan politics, British Canadian victories only confirmed the need to ensure English was the province's only official language, the francophone community viewed its defeats stoically, always maintaining that opponents of bilingualism were wrong. History would vindicate the francophone community; the past could not, at least to francophones, be denied.

The strength and power of the memory of the bilingual West cannot be understated. It took many forms and motivated a number of political causes. During discussions with the Allan Blakeney government, for example, the Fransaskois repeatedly insisted that "nous ne sommes pas comme les autres", and that the Fransaskois community was exceptional. Even though it was a small linguistic and cultural minority, it could claim the earliest European historical roots in the region. Indeed, history and memory were the cornerstones of Fransaskois activism during the 1968 to 1990 period, as they were also fundamental to political arguments used by Joseph Royal and Henri Bourassa to support the French cause in western Canada between 1870 and 1905. Between 1968 and 1990, as attempts to further entrench the "two founding nations" ideal in the Canadian constitution waxed and waned, the Fransaskois used this favourable context to shore up and continue in their insistence that they were right all long: the West was colonized by both French and English-speakers, and this history meant that contemporary equality of the two languages ought to be recognized.

These continuities must also, however, be reconciled with major changes and differences between the two periods. Between 1870 and 1931, it was a commonly-held assumption that Canada was a British country, and that British Canadians occupied the summit of the civilizational hierarchy. Assimilation of minority groups into British Canadian society was not only good for Canada and the well-being of the minority groups themselves. It was viewed as a duty that fit into the overall trajectory and goals of the British empire. After the 1960s, however, Canadian nationalism changed substantially towards a more diverse and properly "Canadian" identity. This change necessitated changes in cultural policy -- a turning away from assimilation and British Canadian ideals towards an ideal of diversity and accommodation. The question of whether or not this shift in cultural policy was successful remains to be debated.

Another key area of change outlined in this study is francophone community activism. Between 1870 and 1931, the francophones of Saskatchewan rarely openly defied the provincial government. Fearing the ire and power of an aggressive British Canadian majority, francophones opted for behind-the-scenes activism and sought to preserve whatever semblance of bilingualism that they could. During the early period of western Canadian history, the Catholic clergy played an important role in developing and maintaining this strategy. This early period made later activism between 1968 and 1990 look radical by comparison. During the latter era, the Fransaskois were vocal. Like before, they were a small minority; by 1968, however, they had lost patience and used a variety of means to cajole the Saskatchewan government into action. They publicly embarrassed premiers Blakeney and Devine on several different occasions. They appealed to other francophone organizations across the country for help in putting pressure on political leaders. They spoke to English-language media outlets and made their case to the public.

Were the Fransaskois successful? Here, the questions of language regime and political community are important to consider. The early period of Saskatchewan history -- 1870 to 1931 -- created and embedded a language regime that supported English as the province's sole official language. Although there were some critical junctures or key moments where this status was challenged or threatened, the primacy of English remained. This early history created a certain amount of path dependency or governmental inertia towards bilingualism which had important, latent effects on how debates over the place of the French language in Saskatchewan between 1968 and 1990. Even if provincial governments during the latter era could be interpreted as doing their best to promote French -- and, as this dissertation argues, that was not always the case -- they still remained unable to get the public to accept official bilingualism in

Saskatchewan. The language regime of Saskatchewan, established during the early period of provincial history, remained remarkably stable and withstood repeated, systematic challenges by the francophone community in the latter half of the twentieth century. The Devine government's reaction to the *Mercure* decision is a useful illustration of this reality. Bob Andrew's defense of Bill 2 justified the present language regime choice by invoking the early vision of Saskatchewan that won out during the autonomy bill debates in 1905 -- a province of one language.

Government and the state are not the sole drivers of society. They do, however, play an important role in supporting and shaping political communities. In this vein, Saskatchewan's unilingual language regime, combined with a certain vision of history promoted by the provincial government, helped perpetuate a political culture hostile to official bilingualism. Conversely, varying viewpoints or ideas on the place of French in Saskatchewan's political community helped to create and shape the place of French within governmental institutions. To say that ideas and beliefs exert an influence on institutions is not to argue that they are the only factors in determining institutional outcomes. Political culture and its relation to institutions, as political scientist Nelson Wiseman argues, is a complex relationship of numerous societal factors which include historical events, institutions, and social mores. In the case of the French language, however, the question of ideology in shaping institutional understandings and policies on bilingualism cannot be ignored. The idea that there was no place for the official recognition of one particular minority in western Canada, for example, which was reiterated over the course of the early era of Saskatchewan history, was again reinforced by the province's multiculturalism policies of the 1970s. Diversity was for everyone, or it was for no one. Although multiculturalism recognized the equality and existence of all cultures in the province, the policy was crafted in opposition to Ottawa's French-English bilingualism policies, again reinforcing the

idea in Saskatchewan political culture that French speakers were unexceptional, merely one minority among many. And, as this dissertation also shows, the political implementation of multiculturalism or bilingualism depended on whose version of memory and history won out. For the francophones, multiculturalism was unacceptable; for many more people in Saskatchewan, the idea that the francophones were special was unacceptable. For the francophones bilingualism in government and schools was a must, based on historical and contemporary understandings of Canadian society; for Saskatchewan provincial governments, there were other factors to consider.

Since 1870, the persistence of competing ideas and memories of western Canada has led to numerous pitched battles between the Fransaskois and the province. In many respects, the Fransaskois have, through their attempts to have their own vision of society recognized publicly, helped create a crisis of identity in the provincial state. Fransaskois vision and activism in past and present has always forced different provincial governments to search themselves and try to determine and define the Saskatchewan identity. On this level of debates over the place of French in Saskatchewan institutions and society, the Fransaskois actually held an advantage over the provincial government. The persistent historical identity of the Fransaskois community differed from the changing identity trends and regional/national pressures exerted on Saskatchewan provincial governments. After 1968, for example, Saskatchewan could no longer identify itself as British as it had before. But the government's need to maintain linguistic and cultural stability during changing economic, social, and political times meant preserving certain institutional and cultural definitions of the province, such as English as the only official language.

In the end, the Fransaskois could not “have it all French, all at once.” Saskatchewan is not a bilingual province. The Fransaskois understanding of history, shared by the Franco-Albertan community, has seen numerous rejections not only from society in general, but the courts as well.² Whatever gains the francophone community achieved took a long time and a great deal of effort. But the Fransaskois would have francophone education, a key victory finally realized in 1995 when Roy Romanow’s NDP government amended the *Education Act* to provide for Fransaskois school governance.³ The Fransaskois achieved governance not only because of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, but because throughout history they refused to give up. They have never let go of the bilingual dream. The Fransaskois’ refusal to assimilate -- giving up their language and culture -- is another important continuity that cannot be denied. To this day, the Fransaskois have survived, and their survival is a testament not only to the vigour and dedication of their political activism, but also to the power of ideas and memory in shaping society. In 1925 ACFC President Raymond Denis could only have dreamed that one day the Fransaskois community would have its own schools run by French speakers. That dream is now a reality, brought about by years of hard work, dedication, vision, and memory.

But Saskatchewan political leaders had their own ideas and memories as well which were, in many ways, irreconcilable with those of the francophone community. Herein lies the core of past and present controversies between the Fransaskois and the provincial government. Both hold strong views on the history of the province which continue to inform their respective understandings of bilingualism and language rights. And, although the Fransaskois have achieved school governance, they continue to yearn for political equality in major provincial

² *R. v. Caron*, [2015] SCC 56.

³ *Education Act*, 1995, c. E-0.2 (Saskatchewan).

institutions. So the debate over the history and nature of Saskatchewan and western Canada will continue, perhaps until one vision triumphs over the other once and for all.

Note on Sources

Because this study deals with questions of bilingualism and the French language, both English and French language documents figure prominently in the analysis. For the sake of consistency documents in English are noted and quoted in English, while for French documents I have also preserved the original language. The months and dates from the Fransaskois newspaper *L'Eau Vive*, for example, are noted in French. Any correspondence in French is also noted in that language; for example, a letter from Irène Chabot to Premier Grant Devine is noted as "Irène Chabot à Grant Devine, 23 janvier 1983."

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