
One Rink, Two Solitudes, Three Nations, Four Regions

Stephen Bocking

In February 2002 the hockey players came home with Olympic gold, to be greeted with cheers from the east to the west. In March the Canadian Alliance elected a leader who advocates a "firewall" around one province to protect it from the malign attentions of the national government. That same month, Statistics Canada released census results tracking a population shifting from the east towards the west—a trend both reflecting and reinforcing regional economic and political changes. In other words, the usual affirmations of unity and fragmentation, national identity and regional tension, typical of this evolving nation. This issue of the *Journal of Canadian Studies* presents a range of thoughtful perspectives on these and other themes.

The triumph of the women's and men's Olympic hockey teams inspired the usual pronouncements about the unifying force of our national game. But as Kevin Gosine and Howard Ramos explain, hockey passions may run deep, but not always in the same direction. They examine how the media, within and outside Québec, responded to the death in May 2000 of the legendary player for the Montreal Canadiens, Maurice "Rocket" Richard. A sharp distinction was evident: while *La Presse* and *Le Devoir* affirmed the Rocket's status as a symbol of Québécois identity, to the English Canadian media he was, in essence, merely a superb hockey player. The distinction, they suggest, epitomizes the divergent meanings attached to hockey in Canada across the francophone/anglophone divide.

If hockey is not the national glue, neither have been, in recent years, federal political parties. A truism of recent history is that most of these parties (the Liberals aside) have lost interest in brokerage politics: the accommodating of diverse interests and political divisions to build support across the west, Ontario,
Québec and the Maritimes. Today, the House of Commons is fragmented, with an opposition dominated by the Bloc Québécois and the Canadian Alliance, each identified with a specific region or linguistic group. In March 2002 the pattern was reinforced by the election of Stephen Harper, an avowed defender of the wealthiest western province, as leader of the Alliance. But as William Cross and Ian Stewart demonstrate, this is not the only possible model for Canadian politics. In New Brunswick a different story has unfolded. Since the 1970s parties once closely tied to their traditional ethnic bases—the Liberals and the francophone community, the Conservatives and anglophones—have won support across the linguistic divide. This outcome, they conclude, is a welcome demonstration of the virtues of civility and tolerance.

Of course, brokerage may be impossible if the interests involved are irreconcilable—say, the Soviet Union under Stalin, and Canadian democracy. Such was the conundrum faced by the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) in the 1930s. John Manley tells how the CPC sought during the Great Depression to develop both a more attractive, and a distinctively Canadian, identity. Affirming that communists could also be good Canadians, the CPC achieved an unprecedented level of support, cutting, to some extent, across the classes. But the anti-Trotsky campaign and the Nazi-Soviet pact showed the limits of this approach: as the World War began, the CPC, ordered by the Soviet Union to remain neutral, lost the sympathy of most Canadians.

Evolving political strategies often reflect trends in Canadian society, including, as seen in New Brunswick, in linguistic identity. And as Jean-Pierre Beaud and Jean-Guy Prévost explain, even the measurement of these trends can be fraught with political significance. Compared to Belgium and Switzerland (two other nations also blessed with linguistic diversity), Canada, they found, puts unusual emphasis on measuring language usage in its census. This reflects the political context of census questions, including the Canadian preference for an approach to relations between linguistic communities that is defined in terms of the rights of individuals rather than in terms of territory, persistent controversies regarding the status of French both within and outside Québec,
and the emergence of the study of linguistic groups as a distinctively Canadian area of professional demographic research.

But other census results released in March 2002 carried their own political implications: the ongoing shift in population from the east to the west, and from the countryside to the cities. The explanation for this movement can be found by following the money: that is, the pursuit of jobs on the western resource frontier, and in urban areas. William Carroll, however, provides another take on Canada's shifting economy, tracking the geography of corporate power across the nation, as represented by the evolving network of head offices. Since the 1940s some cities have grown as centers for decision-making (Toronto, and more recently, Calgary and Vancouver); while others have declined (Montreal, and smaller centres, such as Quebec City and London). Nevertheless, and even in the face of globalization, the predominance of Toronto and Montreal persists.

Shifts in population, economic activity and linguistic patterns exemplify a Canada lacking a fixed identity. Two articles in this issue explore other aspects of Canada's identity, and, even, the nature of identity itself. Celia Haig-Brown tells the story of Nahnebahwequa, a First Nations woman who in 1860 travelled to London to seek "honest justice"—the right to her land. Nahnebahwequa lived in a border world: understanding the laws and customs of the colonisers, but nevertheless committed to her Anishnabe identity. As Haig-Brown explains, her story can help us to understand the complexity of a nation built through colonization.

Grey Owl—Englishman, would-be native, conservationist, imposter—also lived in a border world, one of his own construction. Albert Braz provides a reading of Armand Garnet Ruffo's poem, Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney. Ruffo views Grey Owl with empathy, noting his rejection of European values, and his desire to recreate himself in the image of those he admired, the natives of Canada. According to Braz, Grey Owl's transformation, as presented by Ruffo, suggests the need to interrogate not the deceiver, but our own
assumptions about identities—their construction, their malleability, and (whether by nature or government edict) their rigidity.