

distinct and viable French civilization in the heart of North America. More than one academic and governmental commission has been formed to study the sources of the French-English conflict, and they have all come to the same conclusion: The French in Canada will not melt, and to expect them to is to expect them to commit cultural suicide.

Professor Balthazar's "new idea" is actually a very old one, one that has been rejected time after time by the English Canadian majority. It has not been simply English intransigence that has made generation after generation of Anglo Canadians dismiss the Frenchness of French Canada: It has been policy. The French were in North America long before coming under the dominion of the English. The Act of Union of Canada in 1840, an attempt to fuse the two cultural groups, failed miserably. The current constitution, the British North America Act of 1867, formally recognized the existence of the two language groups. But in the 113 intervening years only the letter of the constitution has been served, never the spirit. Assimilation was always the policy, the goal of English Canada.

Although nominally and legally a bilingual country, the French outside Quebec have by and large been made to feel strangers in their own country, and the more distant from Quebec the more alien the environment to them. Schools for French children have been provided in Alberta and Saskatchewan and even in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, but they are mere gestures. Speakers of French grow fewer and fewer the farther west one moves, and to add insult to indifference the great majority of English Canadians living in Quebec are blatantly monolingual.

### ENGLISH CANADA WORRIES TOO

The intention, it ought to be said, was never wholly malicious. The English, even in England and during the salad days of their empire, have always been ignorant of languages other than their own and scornful of other cultures. The English in Canada, absorbed as they were in their own sense of superiority, simply assumed the Francophones would soon recognize that superiority and surrender themselves, language and all. Obviously, they never did, but the attempt at absorption left the French in Quebec with not a few scars.

Until a few years ago most people who thought about Canada as a nation, both from outside and inside the country, generally shared the image held by English Canadians. The majority of Canadians have always regarded themselves as progressive, enlightened, and modern, and have looked on the Quebecers as regressive, obdurate, and entirely too Catholic. While the English produced engineers, entrepreneurs, bankers, and men of affairs, the French produced doctors, lawyers, farmers, and priests. English Canada was rich, French Canada was poor.

The picture, though overdrawn, is well understood, even by many foreigners. What is not understood is that it has changed dramatically. Quebec is no longer the orphan province of Canada; it is the second richest in the federation of ten provinces and two territories. Quebec produces 37 per cent of Canada's gross domestic product. Its economy is well balanced, with a manufacturing sector of 23 per cent and about 64 per cent of its work force in services. It produces 70 per cent of its own food. Though it has no oil, it has abundant hydroelectricity, some of which it sells in the United States.

But more important, according to a number of economists, French Quebecers have become much more active in the economy. A management revolution has

swept the province. In the past ten years the number of businesses in Quebec grew from 63,000 to 170,000. Though Quebecers still study law and medicine and agronomy, more than a third of university students seeking business degrees in all of Canada are Quebecers.

Today things are more even in Canada than ever before, and some of the psychological elements of the ancient conflict have been ameliorated. Even the English-speaking Canadians have lost much of their self-assurance as they have seen their Anglophile society diluted by immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Europe. Now, according to an interpretation popular among some Canadians, it is the English Canadian who worries about being assimilated—by the Americans.

All great events have their ironic dimension. The Quebec referendum was no less a great event because Quebecers voted to stay with Canada, if only because the vote was not a vote for the status quo but for change within the framework of the federation. The irony has to do with intention. The prime minister no doubt intends to do right by his home province, but to do so—to make the kinds of changes Quebecers demand—will require that the Canadian constitution be amended.

It is one of the eternal embarrassments of Canada that it does not have possession of its own constitution. The document, the British North America Act, sits in London, and there is a strong and widespread sentiment throughout Canada to bring it home. Everybody is in favor of "patriating" the constitution, but everyone also agrees that bringing it back and opening it up to the amendment process would let loose the sort of centrifugal forces that ever threaten the Canadian federation.

Quebec is not the only dissident among Canada's ten provinces. There are strong forces for disunion in wealthy Alberta, and many people in far west British Columbia feel a tighter kinship with the states of Washington, Oregon, and Montana than they do with Ontario, much less with Quebec. Thus the dilemma is evident: Quebec needs more autonomy, but how to grant it while denying special treatment to those other provinces so eager to exercise greater self-control? If all the provinces have their way, Canada could become just a word to describe an ideal that once was.

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## EXCURSUS 2

### June Bingham on IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW NEW CHINA

"Women hold up half the sky," says *The Little Red Book* of Chairman Mao. The quotation struck me as useful to remember before our congressional group embarked this spring on an eight-day trip to China. Once in Peking I could hardly wait to trot out my tiny item of one-woman diplomacy. I had learned to avoid saying "women hold up half the *heaven*" lest, in a Marxist country that had closed down its churches and temples, any such reference to religion be the opposite of diplomatic.

As part of what the Chinese call their "Window to the West" (some call it China's "American Card"), several leaders of the All China Women's Federation had recently spent eighteen days in the U.S. At a meeting with them in Peking they told us how impressed they had been by

American women's efforts to obtain social justice.

"That's as it should be," I said. "Wasn't it your late chairman who said that women hold up half the sky?"

Silence.

Uh-oh, I thought. Mao is dead—in more ways than one.

Uneasy with the silence, I plunged in with my one other prepared ploy. "In your well-known Chinese spirit of 'criticism and self-criticism,' the kind you use in your commune meetings," I said, "do you have any suggestions as to how we American women could improve our efforts?"

This time the silence was not so prolonged. Huang Ying, vice-chairperson of the Woman's Federation, leaned forward: "Would you care for more tea?"

The two revolutions in China that are said to have equalled—if not surpassed—the economic one in terms of impact on the people's daily life are those of women and youth. No longer, in Confucian style, must women defer to men, or the young to their elders. Before "Liberation" Mao's most passionate supporters had included women whose mother's feet, if not their own, had been bound. Now the Chinese constitution declares women and men equal. There should be equal pay for equal work, and—unbelievable as it may seem to old-fashioned Confucians—daughters may inherit equally with sons. Why then, we asked, is the Women's Federation still needed?

For one thing, few women yet share in the top positions of the Communist party or the Chinese Government (as for the lowly positions, every street-sweeper we saw on the clean Chinese streets was a woman). Curiously, the wives of top officials are not given the opportunity to get together. Mrs. Leonard Woodcock, wife of the U.S. ambassador, attended a reception at which she was seated between the wife of China's premier, Mrs. Dong Xiaoping, and the wife of a key vice-premier. She was startled to discover that the two women had never met, as if Mrs. Carter needed to be introduced to Mrs. Muskie.

Implicit in what we were *not* told is that in China, without free media to reveal occupational and other hazards, the Women's Federation does what in a democracy is accomplished by gadfly journalists. Explicit was the fact that Chinese women, all of whom hold jobs, are often still expected to attend to most of the child-care, household chores, and errands for elderly relatives. Said a Federation leader, "In China there is still some 'male chauvinism.'"

"Just like in America," I responded. This time the smiles I had been angling for made their appearance.

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On China's city streets—with people, people *everywhere*—our congressional group never saw a family with more than two children. Most often it was only one round-cheeked, clearly loved, brightly garbed creature in the arms of a parent or grandparent.

The Chinese Government has recently launched a drive to limit family size to one child per couple. Both carrot and stick are being wielded in this endeavor clearly needed in a nation with a billion people and limited arable land.

The "carrot" includes a full ration card for the first baby plus liberal maternity benefits for the mother. Later that child will have priority listing for one of the better day or boarding schools. A second child may still be countenanced, at least for a few more years, but a third will elicit the "stick." This child will receive no ration card, the mother's maternity benefits will be limited, and the couple will be taxed in order to repay the government for the cost of its education.

The kind of social pressure that can be brought to bear



*"Will everybody please sit down and brace himself?... 'cause here's the news..."*

on a Chinese couple by family and peer group, whether in their residential commune or workplace, is difficult for Americans to begin to imagine. Nor can we fathom the lack of privacy that comes from living in a few cramped rooms and sharing a courtyard, water spigot, and latrine with several other families. Even what goes on behind closed doors can be *heard*, and a marital quarrel may bring neighbors at the door with offers of help. In some communes the menstrual cycle for each woman is posted; and if a young mother of one were to become pregnant, her as-yet-childless contemporaries might come to her and say, "Look, if you go ahead with this second child, one of us may not be permitted to have *any*."

In a sense, the one-child project is predicated on the new constitutional equality of the sexes. If a couple starts out with a daughter, this will no longer be accepted as reason for trying for a son. In the cities and towns where housing is limited, the one-child limit may be better observed than in the countryside. The peasants have both more room and greater desire for a son—to work the family plot and care for his aged parents.

Some by-products of the one-child program seem—at least to American eyes—salutary. One is the possible end of the current program to postpone marriage until the man is at least twenty-eight, the woman twenty-five. (There is little premarital sex in China, we were told, and not much adultery.) When a couple is so thoroughly limited as to progeny, their marriage age may not matter.

Other by-products, however, may be less salutary. What will a nation of only-children be like, ruled and lived in by persons lacking that painful but humanizing experience of sharing parents with a sibling? Already some primary school teachers are complaining that the only-children in their classrooms are less willing than the others to share the teacher's attention and to work and play in tandem.

My elation at being with the Chinese in their own land was unexpected. I think it derived in part from the friendliness and intelligence of the people I met, their openness and humor, and also from my sense that they—like we Americans during the Second World War—felt they were working for a higher good and a better future.

*June Bingham, a biographer of U Thant and Reinhold Niebuhr, traveled to China with her husband, U.S. Representative Jonathan Bingham.*