

# Introduction

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Sir John Seeley once wrote that the British Empire was acquired in 'a fit of absence of mind.' Whatever the truth of this comment, it is certainly arguable that the empire was dismantled in a fit of absence of mind. There have, of course, been numerous studies of decolonization, focusing on the political, diplomatic, and economic pressures behind the British decision to dismantle their empire and on the process of negotiation between British officials and those seeking independence.<sup>1</sup> But only recently have British historians begun to assess the significance to those who lived in Britain of the rapid disengagement from empire that took place after the Second World War. The topic remains a highly controversial one, since some British historians continue to insist that the mass of the British people had always been relatively indifferent to the existence of the empire. Bernard Porter has even claimed that the loss of the empire meant little to the British public because 'the mass of the people, as they had all along, cared very little.'<sup>2</sup> Yet it has become harder and harder to believe in this supposed indifference as more recent studies show the importance of the empire in virtually every area of popular culture in Britain. Particularly influential has been the Manchester University Press series on *Studies in Empire* edited by John MacKenzie.<sup>3</sup> As the significance of the empire to the evolution of Britain itself becomes increasingly apparent, British historians have been forced to re-examine the complex ways in which the 'end of empire' affected and continues to affect virtually every area of British life.<sup>4</sup>

The significance of the end of empire has also become an important subject of enquiry in many of the countries that were formerly part of the empire. Particularly relevant to Canadian historians ought to be the frequently heated debate taking place in Australia. Indeed, there are many common features between the approaches of Australian and Canadian historians to the imperial connection. Stuart Ward – one of the contributors to this volume – has recently written that 'Australian historians have tended to look for easily recognisable patterns of national behaviour, constructing

an innate self-sufficient Australian nationalism as the primary force underlying Australia's ambiguous progression towards independent nation.<sup>5</sup> Virtually the same could be said of Canadian historians. Until recently, most Canadian historians were self-confessed nationalists and, though many present-day historians would deny the label, they continue to write from a nationalist perspective little different from that of their predecessors. Like Australian historians, Canadian historians usually present the core dynamic of the relationship with Britain as being based on mutual antagonism, and assume as a given the existence of an innate and irresistible pressure to put an end to the outmoded, unnecessary, and distracting colonial relationship. To challenge this paradigm requires considerable courage, since to do so immediately lays one open to the charge of being an immature colonial, tied to the apron strings of the mother country. Thus, in Australia, Neville Meaney's assertion that until comparatively recently most Australians saw themselves as British and therefore did not seek to break the imperial connection has led to an intense and often bitter debate.<sup>6</sup> Yet it is difficult to see how else one can explain why Australia (and the other colonies of settlement) moved so slowly to cut the umbilical cord with Britain. Not until the 1960s, Stuart Ward points out, was there 'a major re-assessment of the core precepts of the Anglo-Australian relationship,' and it was events in Britain that provided the catalyst for this re-assessment.<sup>7</sup>

In Canada we have yet to see even the beginning of a similar debate. The empire has come to be viewed as a complete irrelevance, and its significance to Canadians in the past is almost completely ignored. More than a decade ago, in my presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association, I asked the question 'Whatever happened to the British Empire?' and attempted to persuade Canadian historians to return imperial history to a central place in Canadian historiography.<sup>8</sup> My plea fell largely on deaf ears. One prominent Canadian historian recently told me how surprised – and implicitly how disappointed – the audience was when I chose not to talk about Canadian history. This comment shows how completely the audience missed the point of my address, which was to argue that Canadian history cannot be understood without recognition of the fact that Canada was for several centuries part of a 'Greater Britain' that extended around the globe. Until well after the Second World War, most English-speaking Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, and English-speaking South Africans were the descendants of migrants from the British Isles, and they wanted to re-create a form of British society in the overseas dominions. They did not want to slavishly reproduce British society; indeed, the majority probably wished to create a 'Better Britain' than the one that existed at home – one free of the class, religious, and other constraints of the mother country.<sup>9</sup> They also demanded, and were given, local self-government. In each of the old dominions there were those who sought some kind of closer imperial

union with the mother country, but they were everywhere in the minority. But while the majority were opposed to any form of imperial federation, they were determined to maintain a close relationship with Britain, which they continued to think of as the mother country. This sentimental attachment to Britain and the imperial relationship did not preclude the evolution of distinct national identities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa, just as being British in Britain did not lead to the collapse of other national identities there. Certainly English-speaking Canadians had no difficulty in holding multiple identities. They saw themselves as both British and Canadian, and they saw the empire as belonging to them as well as to the British who lived in the mother country.

More recently I returned to this theme in a paper on 'The Rediscovery of Canada's Imperial Past,' delivered as the keynote address at a conference on the theme of 'Recasting Canadian History in the Wider World: Towards New Perspectives for the Twenty-First Century.'<sup>10</sup> Once again, the predominant reaction of the audience appeared to be shock – even horror – that I was calling for historians of Canada to return to a focus on a topic best forgotten. In part, this reaction reflects the desire of Canadians to gloss over the part they played in the making of the British Empire, both in the extension of British authority over the upper half of the North American continent and in the support they gave to the extension of British authority in other parts of the globe. Canadians did participate in imperial wars – most notably the South African War but also in other parts of Africa and Asia – and they clearly supported the imperial expansion across the globe. They were proud to see large parts of the map of the world painted red. But English-speaking Canadians would now prefer to ignore their imperial past. Anyone who calls for a re-assertion of the significance of the imperial relationship is dismissed as an imperial apologist, a reactionary who wishes to wallow in imperial nostalgia. This is patent nonsense. One does not have to believe that the empire was a 'good thing' to believe in its importance to generations of Canadians. But there is a deeper problem with the approach of Canadian historians. Because most are Canadian nationalists, they essentially approach the imperial relationship as a handicap that prevented Canada from reaching its potential. They therefore focus on the areas of conflict between Canada and Great Britain, and the gradual extension of self-government as Canada moved from colony to nation. In most Canadian history textbooks, therefore, the emphasis will be on the rebellions of 1837 and the 'struggle for responsible government,' the Confederation of the British North American colonies in 1867-71, the resistance to efforts at imperial centralization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Britain's betrayal of Canadian interests in the negotiations over the Treaty of Washington and during the Alaska Boundary Dispute, the struggle for Canadian autonomy during and immediately after the First World War,

the waste of Canadian lives at Vimy Ridge and Dieppe, and the failure of the British to consult the Canadian government adequately during the Chanak and Suez crises. Each of these events is seen as a stepping stone towards independence and the end of imperial entanglements.

Yet it is important to remember that this is not necessarily how these events were viewed by contemporary Canadians. After the failure of the rebellions of 1837, which were at least as much about who should rule at home as about home rule, there was never again a serious challenge to the imperial connection. Those who invented the term 'responsible government' and sought to have it introduced into the British North American colonies saw it as a means of strengthening and perpetuating the imperial connection – not weakening and shortening it. And they were, of course, correct in that assumption, since responsible government did give those living in the British North American colonies sufficient control over their own affairs to avoid any serious movement towards separation. Confederation was an exercise in nation-building, but it was not designed to lead to the creation of an independent and autonomous state, only to the creation of a larger and more important British colony. Most of those who advocated Confederation – certainly most of the English-speaking Fathers of Confederation – viewed it as a measure that would strengthen and perpetuate the ties between Canada and Great Britain, not weaken them. John A. Macdonald may have been speaking to Queen Victoria when he declared that the Queen and her successors would be the head of the Canadian State forever, but there is no reason to doubt his sincerity. Macdonald was opposed to any form of imperial federation, as were the vast majority of Canadians, for he believed that the empire could only survive if it gave to those colonies with a British majority the power to run their own internal affairs. But he also believed that there was a basic community of interest between the Britons at home and abroad. Most Canadians shared this view. While they may have been angered by the terms of the Treaty of Washington and the Alaska Boundary settlement, they did not abandon their faith in the value of imperial connection. Sir Wilfrid Laurier may have wanted to move Canada gradually towards independence, but he recognized that this was not what the English-speaking majority wanted. Indeed, English-speaking Canadians revealed their commitment to the empire in a small way during the South African War and in an even clearer way during the First World War.<sup>11</sup>

It is a pervasive myth – but a myth nonetheless – that Canadians emerged from the First World War disillusioned and alienated. Obviously some did, but as Jonathan Vance has shown, most Canadians did not accept that the war had been in vain, and they sought to defend the sacrifices that had been made.<sup>12</sup> Even in the interwar years there is no evidence that the majority of Canadians wanted to end the imperial relationship, although they

did want the power to decide for themselves when they would follow British leadership, a power given them at the Imperial Conferences of 1923 and 1926 and confirmed by the Statute of Westminster in 1931. During the 1920s and 1930s the proportion of Canadian trade with Britain and of British capital invested in Canada decreased while the proportion of trade with the United States and of American capital increased, but most English-speaking Canadians still considered themselves to be more British than American. The widespread enthusiasm surrounding the royal tour of 1939, the first to Canada by a reigning monarch, and the decision – taken virtually automatically and without substantial opposition in English Canada – to enter the Second World War, revealed how deeply English-speaking Canadians felt about their British heritage and their commitment to the mother country.

A stronger case can be made for the impact of the Second World War in ending this sense of belonging to a wider British World. In retrospect it seems clear that by the end of the war Britain had neither the will nor the ability to hang on to its empire and that Canada was rapidly becoming more Americanized in culture. Yet we must be careful not to let hindsight becloud our understanding of what Canadians thought at the time. In the 1940s and early 1950s the empire did not yet appear entirely a spent force. India achieved independence and became a republic, but large parts of Africa and Asia were still painted red on the maps of the world, which hung on the wall in every Canadian schoolroom (at least in English Canada). In 1949 the British Commonwealth of Nations became simply the Commonwealth of Nations, but this probably meant little to most Canadians, who saw little significance in the change of wording and who continued to think of the Commonwealth as essentially a club of self-governing British communities, as indeed it basically was until the late 1950s.<sup>13</sup> The majority ethnic group in Ontario, the Maritimes, and English-speaking Quebec were descendants of earlier waves of immigrants from the British Isles, and most of Canada's urban centres received a fresh wave of British immigrants in the immediate postwar period. Indeed, until the 1960s Britain remained the largest single source of Canadian immigrants. Moreover, most of the earlier non-British immigrants had no difficulty with the imperial relationship, particularly in Western Canada where the costs of assimilating into the British majority had long since been paid. Only in Quebec was there a strong desire to end the imperial connection, but just how strong must remain a subject of conjecture, since anti-imperial sentiment rarely expressed itself publicly in the 1950s.

Growing up in the 1950s, born in Canada but with English parents, I did not have any sense that the days of the empire and Canada's ties with Britain were numbered. Like the generation before me, I found in the public library the novels of G.A. Henty, John Buchan, and Rider Haggard, and

unthinkingly absorbed their idealistic view of the empire. I was a cub scout and then a boy scout and then a rover scout, read *Scouting for Boys*, and viewed Lord Baden-Powell as a great imperial hero. I regularly participated in scout camps, which always included sitting around a camp fire singing imperial songs such as 'Marching to Pretoria,' and I can remember a boy scout jamboree in Quebec City in which thousands of Scouts from all across English Canada tramped across the Plains of Abraham arrogantly and thoughtlessly singing 'The Maple Leaf Forever.' I was also one of tens of thousands of school children who were lined up to see Princess Elizabeth when she came to Toronto in 1951, and who cheered and waved Union Jacks in her honour.<sup>14</sup> Like everyone else I viewed the Queen's coronation in 1953 with great enthusiasm and saw the ascent of Everest that year as a great imperial achievement, in which in some ill-defined way Canada shared. We learned in school as an article of faith the advantages of the British form of constitutional monarchy over the republican system of the United States, and were taught by Canadian historians like Donald Creighton, W.L. Morton, and even less imperially minded figures like A.R.M. Lower, that the commitment to the British system of government was one of the key characteristics distinguishing Canadians from Americans. Every year students from Toronto's public schools were selected to form two large city choirs, which performed on two successive evenings in Massey Hall. I was part of the delegation sent from Leslie St. School. The highlight of the concert was a rousing rendition of 'Land of Hope and Glory,' during which several hundred students marched onto the stage carrying alternating Union Jacks and Red Ensigns. Like most of the students present, I had no difficulty in seeing myself as both a Canadian nationalist and a British subject. I simply did not see these identities as incompatible. Of course, Toronto is not Canada, and it may be that the enthusiasm for empire was weaker elsewhere. But I suspect that I was not atypical of a majority of young English-speaking Canadians growing up in the 1950s. It is not that the empire impinged all that often upon our lives, but that there was a huge reservoir of emotional support for the continuation of the British connection, which could be drawn upon in moments of crisis.

The extent of this instinctive loyalty was shown during the Suez Crisis of 1956. We now know that British imperial power in the postwar period was an illusion and that the Suez Crisis revealed that Britain (and France) could no longer act like superpowers. When they attempted to do so in 1956, some Canadians did begin to reassess the value of the historic relationship with Great Britain. But while the Suez Crisis was a undoubtedly a major turning point in Anglo-Canadian relations – and in Lester B. Pearson's personal intellectual odyssey – it is far from clear that the majority of English-speaking Canadians shared Pearson's view of the crisis. It surely was not an accident that it was Ontario and the Maritimes, the areas of Canada with

the highest proportion of people of British ancestry, which brought John Diefenbaker and the Progressive Conservatives to power in 1957. Diefenbaker was elected in part because he promised to restore good relations with Britain – which he naïvely and clumsily set out to do when he made his famous commitment to redirect 15 percent of Canada's trade away from the United States and towards Great Britain. This was an impossible goal. Indeed, the British decision to seek entry into the European Economic Community made clear that the Commonwealth was no longer a viable economic unit.

But the imperial relationship in the colonies settled by British immigrants (or more accurately, resettled after the native peoples had been cleared from the land) had always been based on more than economics. It had been based on a sense of shared ethnicity and values between the British in the mother country and the British in the dominions overseas. The Suez Crisis and the British application for entry into Europe certainly weakened this sense of a shared British identity among many English-speaking Canadians. Somewhat reluctantly, Lester B. Pearson, who had grown up in an intensely pro-British environment and who remained a committed anglophile, decided that it was time for Canada to reject the older symbols of Canada as a British nation – most notably the flag. He was also propelled by a growing fear of where the Quiet Revolution in Quebec might lead, and the need to adopt a series of national symbols that both French- and English-speaking Canadians could honour. In retrospect, those who opposed the new flag and sought to have the Red Ensign – or at least a flag that included the Union Jack – adopted as the official Canadian flag were clearly fighting a losing battle. But that again was not so clear at the time. Whatever his motives – and there is no particular reason to question Diefenbaker's motives any more than there is to question those of Pearson and the proponents of the new flag – Diefenbaker led a vigorous campaign against the new Canadian flag. It was unsuccessful, but it is worth remembering that it was Diefenbaker – not Pearson – who probably spoke for the majority of English-speaking Canadians. In both 1963 and, more significantly, in 1965, Diefenbaker and the Conservatives carried a majority of seats outside of Quebec and a majority of the seats in English-speaking Canada outside of a few urban centres. Diefenbaker did not speak for all Canadians; he did not even speak for all of English Canada. But he did speak for a very substantial number of English-speaking Canadians who saw their ethnicity as British as well as Canadian and who believed that the nation's symbols should incorporate that sense of a British-Canadian identity.

This all seems a very long time ago. Within a few years, partly because of the enthusiasm generated by the centennial celebrations in 1967, the new flag became almost universally accepted by English-speaking Canadians. In parts of rural Ontario, the Maritimes, and the rural West one used to see the

occasional Red Ensign, but it is very, very rarely seen now. Several generations of Canadians have grown to maturity knowing only the modern Canadian flag. They know the words to 'O Canada' but not 'God Save the Queen' – and certainly not 'The Maple Leaf Forever.' Younger English-speaking Canadians now do have a strong sense of national identity and a set of national symbols of which they are intensely proud. But the irony is that Québécois nationalists – and they form a majority of the French-speaking residents of Quebec – share neither the identity nor the commitment to these national symbols. The empire died giving birth to two national identities in Canada, not one, and it is still an open question whether the two can be reconciled within the bosom of a single state.

It thus seems an appropriate time to begin to examine the implications of the end of empire for Canadians. Unlike most of the former British colonies in Africa and Asia, which achieved their independence in the postwar period, frequently after an armed struggle, Canada – like Australia and New Zealand – achieved independence gradually, through a series of steps. Indeed, it remains difficult to say precisely when Canada did become independent. An earlier generation of historians would undoubtedly have chosen the passing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931 as the crucial turning point. The statute gave Canada the right to run its own affairs, although the constitutional amendment of the British North America Act was specifically excluded from the terms of the statute until an amending formula had been agreed upon. This anomaly was finally resolved in 1982, and most people today would probably see the patriation of the constitution in that year as marking the end of the colonial relationship. Either date probably places too much emphasis on the constitutional relationship between Canada and Great Britain. The Statute of Westminster did mean that Canada was effectively self-governing, even in the area of foreign policy, but it did not alter the reality that a majority of English-speaking Canadians still considered Canada an integral part of the empire. Patriation of the constitution did put an end to the problem of finding an amending formula – a problem that was not resolved earlier only because the federal government and the provinces had been unable to agree on a formula. But long before 1982 the majority of Canadians had lost the sense of being part of a British World extending around the globe. For some Canadians the critical turning point was undoubtedly the Suez Crisis in 1956, when Canada rejected British leadership in external affairs and stood alongside the United States. Yet, while Canada's actions during the crisis may have been warmly supported internationally and won Lester Pearson the Nobel Peace Prize, they were rejected by a substantial number – perhaps even a majority – of English-speaking Canadians, who continued to believe that a special relationship could and should exist between Canada and Great Britain. The decision to adopt a



distinctively Canadian flag in 1964 was undeniably a critical moment when Canadians truly declared their symbolic independence. But historians tend to forget that the new flag was not greeted with universal enthusiasm, and that those who opposed the flag were just as proud Canadian nationalists as those who supported it. The issue was no longer whether Canada would have a flag of its own but whether that flag would be the Red Ensign – or at least a flag recognizing Canada's British identity. In this sense, even before the flag debate had begun, the vast majority of Canadians were already first and foremost Canadian nationalists. What is clear from the chapters in this volume is that there was no magic day on which all Canadians came to accept that the empire was over. The empire came to an end at different times and in different ways for different groups of Canadians. But the critical period was the decade from 1956 until 1967 when most English-speaking Canadians were compelled – some very reluctantly – to come to grips with the lingering death of the empire.

The chapters in this volume examine the various ways in which Canadians responded to the end of empire. In 'Imperial Twilight, or When Did the Empire End?' John Darwin examines the problem from the perspective of an historian of the British Empire and of decolonization, about which he has written extensively. As he shows convincingly, by the end of the 1940s the old British Empire had collapsed and could not be resuscitated. But this changed reality was to some extent concealed by the temporary weakness of the European economies and by the willingness of the United States in the early stages of the Cold War to shore up British power. Indeed, while imperial power may well have been based upon an illusion, it was an illusion that was not seriously threatened until well into the 1950s. In 1950 Britain was still the third-ranked world power, and not until the Suez Crisis were the limits of that power revealed. Two chapters in this collection focus on the Suez Crisis. In 'Canadian Relations with the United Kingdom at the End of Empire, 1956-73,' John Hilliker and Greg Donaghy examine Canadian attitudes towards Britain after the Suez Crisis from the perspective of the Department of External Affairs (now the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade). As late as 1956, they point out, Canada's relationship with Britain remained unusually close, which is why the British lack of consultation over Suez came as such a shock to Canadian Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and Minister for External Affairs Lester B. Pearson. But old habits and attitudes persisted, and only gradually was the nature of Canada's engagement with British foreign policy reshaped, until by the early 1970s Britain was seen as just another country with whom Canada had relations. José Igartua, in "'Ready, Aye, Ready" No More? Canada, Britain, and the Suez Crisis in the Canadian Press,' approaches the Suez Crisis from a very different perspective. It is usually assumed that the Suez Crisis was a major

turning point in shaping Canadian attitudes towards Britain, but Igartua shows through an examination of the English-language press that this was not the case, at least for most English-speaking Canadians. In fact, majority opinion in English Canada seems to have been generally sympathetic to the British actions in Egypt, and even those English-speaking Canadians who criticized the British government usually did so reluctantly, from a kind of kith-and-kin perspective. In 1956, Igartua concludes, the essential 'Britishness' of Canada was taken as a given by a substantial majority of English-speaking Canadians. My chapter on the 'Last Great Royal Tour: Queen Elizabeth's 1959 Tour to Canada' reaches much the same conclusion. Even as late as 1959, a tour by the Queen was still considered an event of considerable symbolic importance by English-speaking Canadians, who turned out in large numbers to welcome her. Clearly not all Canadians shared this commitment to the monarchy. The French-Canadian response was not hostile, but nor was it overly enthusiastic, as was the response of many 'new Canadians' (as they were called in 1959). Even many young native-born Canadians of British ancestry showed limited interest in the Queen's tour, which is one reason why it would be the last tour of its kind to Canada.

Although the Queen's visit in 1959 to open the St. Lawrence Seaway had originally been proposed by the government of Louis St. Laurent, Diefenbaker was in power when the tour took place. Diefenbaker had become prime minister in 1957 partly because he was able to tap into the residual loyalty of many English-speaking Canadians to the British connection. But he was aware that the old imperial relationship was gradually being eroded and that for British institutions to survive in Canada they must be Canadianized. Indeed, one of Diefenbaker's major concerns in 1959 was to Canadianize the monarchy, to persuade Canadians that the Queen was coming as Queen of Canada, and that she was a vital part of the Canadian constitution. Diefenbaker saw the British institutions and the British connection as a critical counterbalance to the growing influence of the United States. Yet the Commonwealth was an increasingly frail instrument for this purpose and ultimately, in the election of 1963, Diefenbaker lost power, partly because of his perceived anti-Americanism. The election of 1963 was a crucial turning point because the new prime minister, Lester B. Pearson, had no doubt that it was vital for Canada to retain good relations with the United States. As Gordon T. Stewart points out in "*An Objective of US Foreign Policy since the Founding of the Republic*": *The United States and the End of Empire in Canada*, the American State Department viewed with ill-disguised annoyance Diefenbaker's efforts to reduce Canada's dependence on the United States, and enthusiastically welcomed Pearson's election in 1963. On 23 May 1963 Pearson met in Ottawa with three top American officials and (according to their summary) assured them that the Common-

wealth trading system was doomed. Stewart argues that from the perspective of the American government this meeting marked the end of empire in Canada.

By 1963 it was indeed apparent that there would be no recovery in Canada's trade with Great Britain. Five chapters in this volume deal with the whole issue of Anglo-Canadian trade. In 'Britain, Europe, and Diefenbaker's Trade Diversion Proposals, 1957-58,' Tim Rooth examines the failure of Diefenbaker's poorly thought-out efforts to divert a larger proportion of Canadian trade from the United States to Great Britain. In 'Customs Valuations and Other Irritants: The Continuing Decline of Anglo-Canadian Trade in the 1960s,' Bruce Muirhead takes up the story of the continuing decline of Anglo-Canadian trade, focusing particularly on the various negotiations between the British and Canadian governments aimed at removing barriers to trade. In 'Asleep at the Wheel? British Motor Vehicle Exports to Canada, 1945-75,' Steve Koerner looks at the decline in Anglo-Canadian trade from the British perspective, examining why the British failed to retain a substantial share in the rapidly expanding Canadian market for motor vehicles. Of course, what fatally undermined any hope of a recovery in Canadian trade with Britain (as opposed to British trade with Canada) was the British decision to enter the EEC. In 'Britain, Europe, and the "Other Quiet Revolution" in Canada,' Andrea Benvenuti and Stuart Ward look at the whole issue of trade from a broader perspective than the purely economic. They argue that the decision of the British government to apply for EEC membership in 1961, even though unsuccessful, had significant consequences in undermining the worldview of those English-speaking Canadians who still believed in a special relationship between Canada and Great Britain. Using a term coined by José Igartua, they describe the reaction in English Canada to the British decision as equivalent to the 'Quiet Revolution' in Quebec.

Yet the process of unravelling the remnants of the old imperial connection would be a slow one. As George Richardson points out in 'Nostalgia and National Identity: The History and Social Studies Curricula of Alberta and Ontario at the End of Empire,' until the 1960s the school systems of many Canadian provinces (and not just Alberta and Ontario) embodied an imperial vision of reality. It was a vision warmly embraced, as Paul Rutherford shows in 'The Persistence of Britain: The Culture Project in Postwar Canada,' by the English-speaking elite, which saw British culture as a necessary counterbalance to the vulgar popular culture of the United States. Yet by the 1950s and 1960s, even this battle was being lost as the mass media became increasingly American in inspiration and in content. Moreover, by this time, as Allan Smith points out in 'From Guthrie to Greenberg: Canadian High Culture and the End of Empire,' even Britain's stature as the cultural leader of the anglophone world in the fine, performing, and creative

arts was being called into question. Canadian high culture also increasingly looked to the United States for models and for inspiration.

As Britain's economic, political, and cultural influence declined, Canada had inevitably to redefine its relationship with the United Kingdom. There was a growing desire to end the anomaly that prevented Canada from making any changes in the constitutional relationship between the federal government and the provinces without referring those changes to the British Parliament for approval. Between 1950 and the mid-1960s there were three unsuccessful efforts to find an amending formula. As Penny Bryden shows in 'Ontario's Agenda in Post-Imperial Constitutional Negotiations, 1949-68,' in 1967 it was the government of Ontario that took the initiative and forced Pearson to convene a series of first minister constitutional conferences, which made possible the final push towards patriation. But while constitutional issues were important, for many Canadians the adoption of a distinctively Canadian flag was a much more significant symbolic turning point. As Gregory A. Johnson argues in 'The Last Gasp of Empire: The 1964 Flag Debate Revisited,' the flag debate deeply divided Canadians. In "'One Flag, One Throne, One Empire": The IODE, the Great Flag Debate, and the End of Empire,' Lorraine Coops examines the part played in the flag debate by the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE), one of the largest women's organizations in Canada. The IODE, which had been founded at the beginning of the twentieth century, was in favour of adopting the Red Ensign as the Canadian flag and bitterly opposed to a flag that was devoid of any British symbolism. Yet, after the debate was over, the leadership accepted that continued resistance was futile, though it is doubtful whether all of the rank and file endorsed reality so quickly. Certainly there were pockets of resistance. Many Canadian organizations – such as the Royal Canadian Legion – were far from happy with the new flag and the attempt to remove the signs of Canada's old imperial identity. As Marc Milner argues in 'More Royal than Canadian? The Royal Canadian Navy's Search for Identity, 1910-68,' The Royal Canadian Navy fought a futile rear-guard action to preserve the structure of an imperial navy tradition. For many, the collapse of the old imperial relationship had profoundly negative implications for Canada. Both Harold Innis and George Grant, Doug Francis maintains in 'Technology and Empire: The Ideas of Harold A. Innis and George P. Grant,' viewed the collapse of the British Empire as a disaster that would undermine Canadian independence. Their fears were shared by a host of other scholars, most notably the historians Donald Creighton and W.L. Morton.

Canada's First Nations had a rather different reason for resisting the collapse of the old imperial relationship. In 'Petitioning the Great White Mother: First Nations' Organizations and Lobbying in London,' Jim Miller examines the attitude of the First Nations to the end of empire. The First Nations had

always insisted that their relationship was directly with the monarch in London, rather than with the Canadian government and parliament. Only after the patriation of the constitution made clear that there was no longer any point in appealing to London did First Nations' organizations abandon lobbying there. In an ironic sense the First Nations, who had suffered the longest and most from the creation of the British Empire in Canada, were one of the last groups in Canada to accept that the empire was really dead.

All of the chapters in this volume (except for my own on the 1959 royal tour) were originally given at a symposium held in May 2001 on the theme of 'Canada and the End of Empire' at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, which is part of the School of Advanced Studies of the University of London. Unfortunately only a selection of the papers presented there could be included in this collection. There are also some clear gaps in the collection. We tried but failed to find someone to write a chapter on French-Canadian attitudes towards the end of empire. It is not surprising that this was a topic of greater concern to anglophone than to francophone historians. For earlier generations of English-speaking Canadians the British connection was part of their heritage and a key component of their national identity, while for French-speaking Canadians it was seen as a barrier hindering the evolution of a truly Canadian national identity. The major reason why Pearson decided in 1964 to introduce a new and distinctive Canadian flag was his desire to breach the 'two solitudes,' but for many Québécois this was a decision that came too late. Ironically it was English-speaking Canada, where opposition to the new flag had been strongest, which quickly came to embrace the new flag and the ideal of a Canadian national identity. Yet francophone historians are beginning to realize that the empire did affect the evolution of Quebec in a variety of ways both good and bad, that Quebec culture was partly shaped by the long connection with Britain, and that a history of Quebec, whether it is within Canada or without, has to be placed in the larger context of the history of the British Empire in North America.<sup>15</sup>

We also failed to find someone to write about the whole issue of immigration and the changing composition of Canadian society after the Second World War and its impact on Canadian attitudes towards the end of empire. We need more detailed studies of the attitudes of allophone Canadians (those whose ethnic origins were neither British nor French) towards British Canada and its institutions and symbols. These attitudes varied enormously from group to group and among individuals within the different groups, and they shifted over time. We also need more detailed studies of what the end of empire actually meant to those organizations that most strongly supported the British connection, such as the Boy Scouts, Veterans' Associations, and the Orange Order, as well as more studies of how the

imperial relationship was maintained into the 1950s by the provincial education systems, by royal tours, and by public ceremonies. But what should be clear is that the transition from colony to nation was neither simple nor straightforward.

### Notes

- 1 See, for example, John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization in the Post-War World* (London: Macmillan, 1988), and D. George Boyce, *Decolonization and the British Empire, 1775-1997* (London: Macmillan, 1999).
- 2 Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1995* (Harlow: Longman, 1996), 347. Porter is in the process of completing a book, which he claims will show that even at its peak the Empire was of interest to only a tiny minority of the residents of the United Kingdom.
- 3 See, in particular, John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and John MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).
- 4 See Stuart Ward, ed., *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).
- 5 Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 5.
- 6 See Neville Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography,' *Australian Historical Studies* 32/116 (April 2000): 76-90, and the various responses, *ibid.*, 128-36.
- 7 Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*, 11.
- 8 P.A. Buckner, 'Whatever Happened to the British Empire?' *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 3 (1992): 3-34.
- 9 This is the fundamental problem I have with the chapter on the 'Dominions' in David Cannadine's stimulating study, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2002). It is simply not true that all – or even most – of those living in the Dominions were in favour of replicating the British class structure. For the concept of 'Better Britain' I am indebted to James Belich.
- 10 The conference, organized jointly by the University of Genoa and the University of Toronto, was held at Sestri Levante, Italy, on 2-6 May 2001.
- 11 On Canada's participation in the South African War, see my chapter on 'Canada' in *The Impact of the South African War*, ed. David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002).
- 12 See Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).
- 13 Even Pearson found it difficult to admit the significance of the change. See John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson, Vol. 2: 1949-1972* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 27-28.
- 14 To be strictly accurate, the Union Jack is a naval flag and the correct description should be the Union Flag; however, Canadians have always referred to the Union Flag as the Union Jack and this usage has been retained throughout this volume.
- 15 See, for example, the work of Gérard Bouchard, especially his *Genèse des nations et cultures du nouveau monde: Essai d'histoire comparée* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2000).