

God in the Centennial: Religion and the State in the Canadian Interfaith Conference, 1965-1967

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“The experience of 100 years as a modern political state *Canada*, is as a milestone on our national journey,” spoke Peter Aykroyd to the assembled delegates. “Our passage up to and *past* that milestone is inexorable. We *must* prepare for the day when we will reach it. It cannot be moved. We cannot turn aside. It will not go away.” The group to which he spoke, he argued, was “in a position of influence . . . of power and of responsibility, of a kind not represented by any other Centennial group . . . and potentially exercisable to a degree not possible by secular oriented organizations.”¹

So argued Aykroyd, Director of Public Relations for the Canadian Centennial Commission (CCC), to a unique audience indeed. From the podium, he looked out into the faces of representatives of 28 different faith groups in Canada, gathered on that day to discuss, plan and listen. Catholic bishops and Pentecostal laymen, Jewish rabbis and Muslim officials, followers of Ba’ha’u’lah and followers of Buddha all sat quietly, side by side, gathered as members of one organization: the Canadian Interfaith Conference (CIC).

Begun in 1965, the CIC was established to plan for and encourage participation in Canada’s 1967 Centennial celebrations, without doubt the largest, most comprehensive, nationalist project in Canadian history. From a total of 24 different faith groups at its first meeting in July of 1965 the membership of the CIC grew to 28 by April 1966, and to 34 by its third and final meeting in 1967. In that span of less than two and one-half years, the participating representatives would organize and complete a number

of nation-wide projects, including the writing of a religious declaration, a bilingual anthology of prayer, and an anthem and hymn. They would also send a conference publicity kit, including all of the above and more, to 19,000 ministers of every known organized religion in Canada.

In this essay I would like to take a specific angle on the CIC. Peter Aykroyd's words, quoted above, and the title of office which he then carried, suggest the importance of a major theme in the history of the Conference. Aykroyd, as the Director of Public Relations for the CCC, represented the government of Canada to the CIC on that April day in 1966. John Fisher, Chairman of the CCC, also gave glowing opening remarks. More importantly, the funding for that gathering, for the others which came before and after it, for the administrators who ran it, and for the publications created by it – all monies required over the course of the life of the conference were paid for, not by the member faiths but by the government of Canada. A study of the CIC, therefore, has something to say about the relationship between religion and the state in the years leading immediately up to, and including the centennial year in Canada, 1967.

At the roots of the CIC were the interests of the Canadian government. Called together by the initiative of the federal government of Canada in 1965 and completely funded by the government for its two and one-half year existence, the CIC was organized to help coordinate and plan a national celebration of the 100th anniversary of Canada. The founding principle of the religious conference was, put simply, the desire for participation in a massive state project for Canadian national unity.

These statements can easily be supported through the contextualization of the CIC, and of its parent body, the CCC. Brought to life through an act of legislation in 1963, the CCC was the main governmental body working to plan the centennial celebrations in Canada. Unfortunately for its officials, it was born into uncertain times for Canadian society, and therefore, for the Canadian state. In J.L. Granatstein's words, the decade between 1957 and 1967 saw Canada "changing rapidly from an entity that had seemed to understand the verities of life to one that was uneasily adrift on a sea of conflicting choices and too rapid change."²² Politically, this confusion was reflected in the poor health of Confederation, then in its tenth decade. Regionalism had appeared once again in the federal election of 1963, an election which awarded Lester B. Pearson's Liberals the first elected minority federal government since 1921, and which saw the Liberals nearly shut out of the west, and the Conservatives soundly de-

feated in Quebec. Indeed, Quebec itself, home to the increasingly vociferous proponents of the Quiet Revolution, was becoming a major focus of national unrest. As the decade progressed, some Quebeckers became more determined in their quest for self-determination, as expressed by the Union Nationale's "Egalite ou Independence" platform in the election of 1966.³ If regionalism was dividing the country politically, then separatism, by the Centennial year, was actually threatening to destroy it.

That the federal government of Canada was concerned about national unity was made obvious by its actions. In 1963, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was formed. In 1965, a new national flag replaced the old British ensign. And in 1967, Canada received a new official national anthem. In that same year, it is little wonder that the federal government looked also to a national celebration of the centennial of Confederation to strengthen love and devotion towards Canada.

The CCC, in this context, can be seen as one of several attempts to attain the elusive cultural and social unity of the "Canadian nation." According to the Canadian Secretary of State in 1964, Maurice Lamontagne, the centennial was one part of "the overall plan of the government to foster unity in this country."⁴ This objective was boldly voiced throughout the CCC's existence. The Chairman of the CCC, John Fisher, for example, argued in May of 1965 that "the centennial year is our never-to-be-seen-again chance to achieve unity in diversity . . . This has been the philosophy underlying centennial preparations from the very beginning."⁵ And Professor Cornelius J. Jaenen, in a paper presented to the National Conference on the Centennial of Confederation in Toronto in November 1964, made perhaps the boldest declaration on this point. "The impact of the centennial," he contended,

ought to be a meaningful, constructively oriented NATIONALISM . . . which gives to a people a sense of organic unity, and separates it from the rest of mankind. We must employ all means of propaganda available in a mass media society in order to stir up latent national feeling, in order to direct into productive channels the emotional response aroused.⁶

If the CCC's goal was the somewhat ethereal one of fostering national unity through a reinvigorated nationalism, it had practical ways of achieving it. The Act of Parliament which had created the CCC stated that

it was to “promote interest in, and to plan and implement programmes and projects relating to, the Centennial of Confederation in Canada in order that the centennial may be observed throughout Canada in a manner in keeping with its national and historical significance.”⁷ One way to accomplish this, the minutes of the Board of Governors stated, was to “engage the services of organizations or agencies already established in specific fields to . . . conduct programs under grant or subsidy, on behalf of the Commission.”⁸

Enter the organized religions of Canada. If the Canadian government, through the CCC, was looking to enlist established organizations in its quest for national unity, the national religions were excellent candidates. The mainline Christian denominations had a congregation in nearly every community in Canada. That institutional capability, combined with their moral force, clearly convinced CCC officials that organized religions in Canada were desirable junior partners. Aykroyd’s words about the “power and responsibility” of the churches certainly reflect this. So do the words which John Fisher spoke to the CIC’s first meeting in 1965. “[C]ertainly there is no sounder approach to the 20 millions living in this vast land than through their places of worship,” he stated. “The enthusiasm you see created in building a new house of worship, paying off a mortgage, building a school or helping the less fortunate is the same excitement that can make centennial year one to be remembered by Canadians forever.”⁹ The religions of Canada, Fisher and Aykroyd realized, had the organizational means, moral influence, and determination to aid the government in its centennial project.

It is a testimony to the patriotism and initiative of some faith groups in Canada that they were noticed by the CCC only after they had begun to plan their own celebrations. In October of 1964, Robbins Elliot, the Director of the Planning Branch of the CCC, wrote a memorandum on “Church Centennial Participation in 1967.”¹⁰ Apparently, a number of newspaper articles dealing with church plans for centennial activities, as well as “a few isolated inquiries to the Commission,” had made him aware of involvement in the centennial “on the part of some individual church organizations.” This prompted him to try to bring these religious groups under the umbrella of the government body. “Because the Commission should either be cognizant of activities planned for 1967 by large organizations or should be fostering activities where none exist,” he wrote, “it is considered that some form of liaison with the churches should be established as soon

as possible.” Besides, the resources of organized religions made them very attractive partners. Elliot continued, “It is distinctly to our advantage to endeavour to enlist the support of organizations so well prepared in every way to do a fine effort on any undertaking they can be persuaded to accept.”¹¹

Elliot’s message of the potential of church involvement for the planning of the centennial was positively received. A month later, a panel discussion on the topic took place, and the panelists, too, were clearly enamoured with the idea of church participation, suggesting that “the time was right to bring together the religious leaders of Canada and to get them involved in a common task. To this effect,” they wrote, “the Commission is *strongly* urged to organize a meeting . . . to bring together religious leaders in order that, together, they can decide for themselves what they should do and can do best for 1967. The Commission should simply act as a catalyst.”¹²

To make a longer story short, it was decided that “a conference should be called by the Commission to which the churches would be invited to send one or two official delegates.”¹³ That conference, entitled the Canadian Interfaith Conference, was convened in Ottawa on 5 July 1965. It was completely funded by the CCC. During that first gathering of representatives from 24 different faith groups in Canada, each personally invited by the Chairman of the CCC, committees were formed to brainstorm about possible plans for religious centennial events, and to report back to the entire conference at the end of the weekend. Ideas for Interfaith Library shelves, for Interfaith religious services, for a “Religious Declaration” by the member faiths, a Centennial Anthem and Centennial Hymn, and, most ambitiously, a Centennial Anthology of Prayer were bandied about and developed over the period of two days.

In the months following the first CIC, the CCC and the Steering Committee worked closely together to implement the initial decisions and plans made over the two days of discussions. The CCC’s role as a “catalyst” for the CIC, apart from requiring its financial support, also resulted in the use of CCC personnel and office space to handle the administrative tasks for the CIC. The CCC became a crucial factor in the every day existence of the CIC by preparing agendas for meetings, writing and sending correspondence to participating religious groups, and handling publicity through its own personnel and press releases.

Indeed, the influence of the CCC in the early days of the CIC went

even beyond this close involvement. When the Steering Committee chose to set up a Board of Directors and, within that body, an Executive for the CIC alone, it significantly appointed Andre LeBlanc, the Director of the Historical Division of the CCC, to an Executive position. Along with Lavy Becker, a representative of the Canadian Jewish Congress and future Chairman of the CIC, LeBlanc was given full powers to appoint a further three persons to the Executive.¹⁴

The beginnings of the CIC, then, reveal heavy involvement with the CCC. They also reveal hints that some were not entirely comfortable with this situation. Although this discomfort was likely felt for a number of reasons, several interesting episodes in the life of the CIC, when linked together, suggest one reason of particular interest. If the institutional and moral resources of the religions of Canada made them excellent candidates for partnership with the state in the centennial celebrations, their existence as religious institutions may have created tensions in a number of places. A close look at the rhetoric and agreements surrounding the CIC's relations with the CCC suggests that the direct involvement of the state in religious affairs was perceived by some to be a sensitive issue.

Such sensitivity was already revealed in the language of the Church Panel's original recommendation for the formation of the CIC quoted above. The caveats in the Panel's report that the religious leaders "should decide for themselves" what they would do for the centennial and that "The Commission should simply act as a catalyst" indicate some consternation on behalf of the writers. If nothing else, they significantly suggest that this was to be a carefully articulated relationship between state initiative and church involvement.

A sensitivity to the close involvement of the state in religion was also revealed in the creation of the financial and administrative structure of the CIC. The minutes of Executive Committee of the Interfaith Conference on 22 July 1965 already betrayed, at that point, a CCC that was concerned about maintaining some distance from the religions of Canada. In discussing the formation of a Secretariat to handle the administrative duties of the CIC, for example, LeBlanc, representing the CCC, suggested that it would provide a grant of over \$20,000 a year to cover the expense. But he also made it clear that "funds for actual projects would be another matter, and presumably would be raised by participating religious groups."¹⁵ A look at the balance sheet of the CCC suggests its financial situation was likely not the issue here.¹⁶ Instead it seems that,

though the CCC was prepared to fund the administrative portion of the religious CIC, it was not as comfortable paying for actual projects of a religious nature.

The CCC's perception of itself as a "catalyst" was also strongly voiced in that meeting. Lest any of the members of the Executive had begun to consider their close relations with the CCC permanent, LeBlanc served notice that "the Commission foresaw itself gradually withdrawing from the picture, leaving the Inter-faith Conference and its executive on its own, with the Commission maintaining a liaison."¹⁷ On this point, the CCC kept its word. Though the CCC served as headquarters for the CIC, hosting its Executive meetings in its building and handling all correspondence and administrative tasks which it required, it only did so until December of 1965, when the CIC established its own secretariat. And Andre LeBlanc's position on the Executive of the CIC, perhaps the most obvious representation of the CCC's involvement, was quite suddenly terminated in May 1966. The members of the CIC were indeed to "decide for themselves" what to do for the centennial.

Again, such withdrawals from direct involvement in the affairs of the CIC may have been due to any number of reasons. A closer look at the rhetoric and correspondence surrounding the CIC's move from the CCC's headquarters and the resignation of LeBlanc suggests, though, that among others, perceived tensions due to state involvement in religious affairs were a likely factor. When the Secretariat was finally formed in December 1966, and a \$60,000 grant was negotiated with the CIC, the formal contract signifying this formation and grant reflected some uneasiness on the part of the CCC in being too closely tied to the religious CIC. It included as a stipulation for the approval of the grant that the Secretariat would "be located outside Centennial Commission Headquarters."¹⁸ This qualification was also contained in a memo from Robbins Elliot to the Board of Directors of the CCC. His wording suggests that, though space in the CCC offices may have been limited, space was not the only issue. The *appearance* of distance between the two bodies was just as much a factor. The Secretariat should be located outside the CCC's headquarters, Elliot wrote in an key phrase, because it should "be independent of the Centennial Commission."¹⁹

The resignation of LeBlanc also implies this motivation. A letter from Lavy Becker to LeBlanc, written three days after LeBlanc's letter of resignation, makes clear Becker's surprise and dismay concerning

LeBlanc's apparently unexpected decision. But as we have already seen, the CCC had long planned for this change to take place. After listing "the pressure of work" as his first excuse, LeBlanc went on to explain that his resignation was necessary due to "the fact that it is preferable that the Centennial Commission be represented by an observer rather than a member of the board."²⁰

Some members of the CCC, then, appear to have considered its involvement in the CIC a sensitive issue. But though this concern seems to have led to a lessening of direct and formal links between the two bodies, it did not lead to a complete cutting of less formal ties. Throughout the life of the CIC, the organization of Canadian religions relied completely on the Public Relations Department of the CCC for all of its publicity needs. And though the original plan of the CCC was to give just over \$60,000 to the CIC to cover only administrative costs, by the end of the CIC's existence it had granted a total of close to double that amount to cover all costs of the organization, including all publications, conferences, and promotional materials. The Canadian government completely funded, for example, the creation and publication of a *Centennial Anthology of Prayer*. The member faiths, it turned out, did not contribute any funds over the entire two and one-half years of the CIC's operations.

In the light of the close involvement between religious groups and the state and the apparent tension it caused, it is telling to note how the officials of the CIC viewed those close links. Their comments paint a rather different, enthusiastic picture of their cooperation with the state. In their opinion, the Executive bodies of both organizations, even after LeBlanc's resignation, remained in close contact, both asking and seeking advice of the other on a regular basis. The minutes of a Board of Directors meeting of the CIC in September 1966, stated that "the CIC has mushroomed into one of the most active planning branches of the Centennial Commission and has become an info centre and clearing house for Provincial and National bodies."²¹ Eve Gilstorf, the Executive Director of the CIC, wrote in a summary of the CIC's activities, that "In all our efforts, we kept our parent body, the Centennial Commission, constantly informed, for it was our bridge to the government departments concerned . . . We were . . . the resource office both for the Centennial Commission and various other government agencies."²² This close relationship with the CCC is what prompted Becker, Chairman of the Board, to write to Fisher in 1966, "How warmly you [have] encouraged us at every moment."²³

In brief, the officials of the CIC did not see anything to cause tension in their close involvement with the CCC. They openly recognized that involvement – at times even trumpeting it. And in the midst of that trumpeting, the vast majority of Canadian citizens apparently did not take issue either, let alone a great deal of interest. During its existence, the CIC met with very little public criticism,²⁴ and though the CCC appointed a person to write and release articles on the CIC to the press, officials of the CIC were continually disappointed by the poor level of press coverage their organization received.²⁵

Such a high level of government involvement in Canadian religious affairs, when matched with this lack of controversy, is suggestive. Most officials of Canadian faith groups, at least, were apparently not concerned about the separateness of religion and governmental institutions. Such a conclusion is not without support. John Webster Grant has argued, correctly it seems, that “the term ‘separation of Church and State’ has never aptly described the Canadian situation.” The Canadian churches, in his view, had long considered themselves “closely integrated into the national life,” the moral conscience of the nation.²⁶ Recently, Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie have added weight to this argument, showing how in the inter-war period, Christianity was intricately and significantly involved in Canadian public and political life.²⁷ In this context, the CIC appears not as a controversial aberration for members of at least the larger Christian denominations of Canada, but as a kind of fulfillment of long-held dreams. Many Canadian citizens calling themselves Christian in the 1960s may have simply assumed that religion had a natural place in political and public life.²⁸ Those of non-Christian faiths, judging from their involvement in the CIC, apparently felt the same way.²⁹

To suggest, however, that no conflict took place whatsoever in the short history of the CIC would be to misrepresent the facts. As the CIC began to push harder to reach every house of worship in Canada in its preparations for the centennial year, it became clear that some Canadians, though a minority, felt uneasy with it. Even these episodes of conflict, though, serve more to support the apparent contentment of Canadians with the mixing of religion and the state than to refute it.

One such episode of discord involved a member of the Atlantic Baptist Convention, the Reverend Lloyd Leadbeater. Much to Eve Gilstorf’s dismay, Leadbeater kept returning, unopened, the CIC’s mail. To get to the bottom of the problem, Gilstorf sent a letter to the Baptist

Federation of Canada, the national body of which the Atlantic Baptist Convention was a member, asking for an explanation. Although brief, the General Secretary of the Federation's response spoke volumes. "We have a native reluctance for involvement in anything which savours of a state church or movement towards structural unity,"³⁰ he explained.

At first glance, this small declaration of resistance on the part of Leadbeater seems to argue that the separation of religion and the state was, indeed, being compromised in the CIC in the minds of some. A second glance, however, qualifies this. Leadbeater refused to participate personally in the CIC, but the General Secretary's letter suggests that a distrust of ecumenism may have been as much the cause as the joining of church and state.³¹ Indeed, the vast majority of Convention Baptists, even though they presumably shared the common "native reluctance" to the mixing of church and state in the Baptist tradition, remained involved in the CIC throughout its existence. The Baptist Federation of Canada, an organization which represented nationally the Baptist Conventions across Canada, was a proud participant in the CIC. Leadbeater, at least as far as the records of the CIC go, was very much on his own.

Leadbeater's resistance was minor in its impact compared to that expressed by many of the clergy and press in Quebec. In a political and cultural environment which was both rapidly secularizing and highly sensitized to any influence of the federal government, it is telling that many Quebec clergy were apparently leery of weakening their already strained positions by supporting the CIC. Its foundations, they felt, were more political than religious. In Quebec, two authors have suggested, the CIC was seen "as an unjustified utilization of ecumenism for political aims."³²

This understanding of the CIC predictably led to poor showings of support for its efforts in Quebec. In an angry letter to the Public Relations director of the CCC, Eve Gilstorf wrote that a recently held Interfaith Conference in Montreal "was doomed from the start." "The whole conference down there reeked of separatism," she wrote tersely, "and there is no other way of saying it."³³ Clearly, the CIC represented to many clergymen in Quebec, not an opportunity for ecumenism, but another government program to inspire a Canadian nationalism which they had no interest in feeling. Gilstorf wrote to Becker,

Even people who have been welcome in Quebec in the past no longer enjoy this relationship, regardless of how fluent their French is, if they

do not consent with the thinking that Confederation is not a happy occasion and Quebecers have no reason to feel grateful to those who shaped our country . . . Many great men in Quebec have fallen at the hands of the separatists. Some of the most prominent religious leaders have also suffered and the hate propaganda is building all the time.³⁴

The lack of support by Quebecers for the CIC suggests again that the direct involvement of the federal government in the affairs of the CIC was no secret.³⁵ The Quebec episode also shows, however, that Quebecers were essentially more concerned about the intrusion of the federal government into their province than about the right of the state to be involved in religious affairs. They were not concerned about *a* government being involved in religion. If, for example, the CIC had been the result of cooperation between the provincial government of Quebec and religion for the betterment of that province, one can imagine that the Quebec clergy's response would have been different. In essence, the CIC was too closely linked to the *federal* government to be accepted in the volatile environment of a modernizing Quebec. Quebec's challenge to the hegemony of the federal state in Canada evidently translated into a challenge to the CIC as a part of that hegemony. Because of their heightened sensitivity to intrusions of the federal government, Quebecers perceived the CIC as just one more government body attempting to persuade them to put aside their concerns and to just be good Canadians.

Even these two episodes of conflict, then, can be interpreted as evidence for the lack of importance that was placed on maintaining distance between religion and government by Canadians in the early to mid-1960s. A cautious perspective on relations between religion and the state was apparently one of a small and discreet minority. An examination of the termination of the CIC confirms this conclusion.

Since the CCC was the sole provider of the CIC's funding, it held the fate of the CIC completely within its own hands. As the year 1967 was drawing to a close and the work for the centennial neared completion, it became ever more apparent to the Board of Directors of the CIC that government funding would be removed, and its existence ended.

That was an eventuality that, not surprisingly, they fought. Already in the spring of 1966, voices were raised to suggest a continued existence of the CIC beyond the centennial year.³⁶ Rationale for this hope varied. Though national unity was a clear concern of the CIC, the ecumenical

movement was, for many of its participants, an equally important motivating factor in their involvement that led them to look beyond the centennial year. Towards the end of 1966, the CIC was also finding opportunities for involvement in other distinctly non-centennial events, prompting Lavy Becker in February 1967 to suggest that “there is definitely a need for the existence of the Interfaith Conference beyond centennial year, judging from various requests from different Ministries, especially the Secretary of State and External Affairs, who have used our address for guidance.”³⁷

If the CIC was enthusiastic about the continuing role it could play in the religious and public life of Canada, the CCC was considerably less interested, remaining focused on the centennial. Hence, when the CIC requested continued financial support beyond the centennial year, it was bluntly turned down. At its meeting on 13 March 1967, the Executive Committee of the CCC instructed the CIC to terminate its existence by 1 December 1967. A push by the CIC for its continued survival resulted in a reappraisal of the issue the following August, but the outcome did not change. The minutes of an Executive Committee meeting of the CCC recorded its decision:

It is suggested that while it was justifiable for the government on the occasion of the Centennial of Confederation to be directly involved in Church Activities, no such justification will exist after 1967 . . . It is recommended that no action be taken to perpetuate the Canadian Interfaith Conference.³⁸

The Executive of the CIC took the final news quietly, but were deeply disappointed that an institution in which they had seen so much potential would not continue. For a short time, they had been enamoured with the possibilities which state funding and official status had offered them. For the larger Christian denominations who had always been interested in being the moral guardians of the nation, the CIC had been a welcome addition to their long history of church/state relations. Because of its interfaith character, it had also been a near perfect match for its time, reflecting not only the growing concern for ecumenism in religious circles, but also the growing emphasis on pluralism in Canada in the 1960s. As long as each participating faith group had been willing to accept and listen to the others, the CIC existed in peace.³⁹ Under such conditions most

religious groups in Canada were more than happy to take their place in the national sun. And most Canadians, being members of one these faith groups, had been happy to follow along.

But from the very beginning of the CIC, that time in the sun had had strict limitations. The decision of the CCC Executive, while again suggesting discomfort with the close relations between religion and state in the CIC, finally made those limits clear. It openly acknowledged that through the CCC the government was “directly involved in Church Activities,” implied that this was abnormal, and that it therefore required a “justification” which only existed during the centennial year.

That involvement, on the one hand, is a testimony to the perceived power and stature of religion in Canada in the 1960s. Religion was important enough to the people of Canada that it was very naturally included, even in a relatively new pluralistic form, in the public celebrations of the centennial. Ignoring it would have been unthinkable. On the other hand, the direct involvement of government in the CIC is a testimony to the power of nationalism and the perceived contribution it could make to a fragile and apparently disintegrating Canadian nation. That, of course, was the CCC’s driving force. For a short time, the CCC implied in its reasoning for the cessation of funding, the totalizing, even, in Aykroyd’s words, inexorable nature of the nationalist drive for Canadian unity had overridden all other concerns. The “direct involvement in Church Activities” was justifiable, if only for a few years, to ensure that the ultimate goal of national unity was achieved.

For government officials, those who seemed most sensitive to this unusually direct union between religion and state, it was not unlike the situation of a country at war. So, at least, would their rhetoric suggest. The drive for national unity through the centennial celebrations was, for them, like a drive for national survival in the midst of armed conflict. Broadly speaking, the threat compelling the two drives was similar: national dissolution, apparent chaos, the loss of something dearly loved. The cure was too: the threat of national dissolution, whether coming from within or without, required an all-encompassing nationalism that would mask all differences and allow a strong, unified struggle for survival. In this context, Peter Aykroyd’s speech to the second CIC seems almost alarming. The centennial, he argued, would “seize our country.” It was an event which was “bigger than any one platform, dogma or custom,” and which would bring “forgiveness of each others peculiarities, God given differ-

ences of opinion, attitude and view.”⁴⁰ In John Fisher’s words, the centennial was a “never-to-be-seen-again chance to achieve unity in diversity.” To Professor Jaenen, it called for the employment of “all means of propaganda available in a mass media society in order to stir up latent national feeling.” With the stakes so high, all the stops had to be pulled.

Fortunately for them, the gamble paid off. “Suddenly,” wrote Granatstein about the centennial year, “Canada was fun.”⁴¹ The country was overwhelmed by what another author has dubbed the “Whoopie-we’re-a-hundred-years-old-spirit.”⁴² In the midst of that fun and national euphoria created by the nationalist celebrations many must have wondered: who but the cold of heart would criticize the state’s attempt, through religion, to foster joy and unity in a struggling land?

Endnotes

1. Address to the Canadian Interfaith Conference, 27 April 1966, file 6, MG 28 I 76 vol. 4, National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC).
2. J.L. Granatstein, *Canada 1957-1967: Years of Uncertainty and Innovation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), xiii. Though it is selective in its coverage, Granatstein’s account conveys a good feel for the period, and contains a very good presentation of its political malaise. See also Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1981).
3. R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones and Donald Smith, *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Limited, 1988), 364. Daniel Johnson, the leader of the Union Nationale when it took power in 1966, published a pamphlet before the election entitled, “Egalite ou independance.” In it, “he warned that if French Canada could not achieve equality within Canada, there would be no choice but to seek independence.”
4. “Proceedings of the Fourth Meeting of the National Conference: Toronto, 25-26 November 1964,” file 5, RG 69 vol. 386, NAC. These are actually the words used by John Fisher, Chairman of the Centennial Conference, in a synopsis of Lamontagne’s speech.
5. “Proceedings of the Fifth Meeting of the National Conference: Regina, 11-12 May 1965,” file 5, RG 69 vol. 386, NAC.
6. “The Impact of the Centennial of Confederation as a Factor in Canadian Unity,” file 5, RG 69 vol. 386, NAC.

7. *Centennial of Canadian Confederation Act*, 9-10 Elizabeth II, 1960-61, c.60 as amended by 1963, c.36, sec. 9 (1).
8. “Basic Objectives or Guidelines for the Centennial Commission”, approved by the Board of Directors on 27 November 1964, RG 69 vol. 389, NAC.
9. “Report on the Inter-Faith Conference Activities Held in Ottawa on 5 July 1965,” file 2, MG 28 I 76 vol. 3, NAC.
10. Robbins Elliot to Management Committee, 14 October 1964, “Memorandum to Management Committee On Church Centennial Participation in 1967,” file 2, MG 28 I 76 vol. 11, NAC.
11. Robbins Elliot to Management Committee, 14 October 1964, “Memorandum to Management Committee On Church Centennial Participation in 1967,” file 2, MG 28 I 76 vol. 11, NAC.
12. “Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Standing Committee on Historical Activities of the National Conference on the Centennial of Confederation,” file 5, RG 69 vol. 386, NAC.
13. “Inter-Faith Steering Committee: Minutes of a meeting on Tuesday, 9 March 1965 at the Chateau Laurier to discuss Church Participation in the Centennial of Confederation,” file “Church Participation,” MG 28 I 76 vol. 11, NAC.
14. “Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, 20 October 1965,” file 5, MG 28 I 76 vol. 1, NAC.
15. “Memo to Father Mathieu [et al] . . . RE: 22 July 1965 meeting of Executive Committee of Inter-faith Conference . . .,” section 4, file 1, MG 28 I 76 vol. 1, NAC.
16. First, Richard Kicksee clearly shows that the CCC was happy to fund events from other distinct groups within Canadian society including native powwows (“‘Scaled Down to Size’: Contested Liberal Commonsense and the Negotiation of ‘Indian Participation’ in the Canadian Centennial Celebrations and Expo ‘67, 1963-1967,” M.A. thesis, Queen’s University, 1995, Appendix A). Second, expressed in 1967 dollars, the total expenditures of the CCC from 1963 to 1968 was close to an astounding \$85 million. Within that sum, a total proposed grant to the CIC of \$60,000 over three years was negligible. These figures are taken from Peter Aykroyd, *The Anniversary Compulsion* (Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1992), Appendices I-L. Aykroyd presents the sums in 1992 dollars. I have worked them back into 1967 figures, using the inflation rate of 4.2% which he borrowed from Statistics Canada. In 1992 dollars, the CIC received some \$459,000: that compares with \$604,202 spent on “Historical Re-enactments,” \$489,632 on “Student Involvement,” and

\$835,724 on “Participation by Indians.”

17. “Memo to Father Mathieu [et al] . . . RE: 22 July 1965 meeting of Executive Committee of Inter-faith Conference . . .,” section 4, file 1, MG 28 I 76 vol. 1, NAC.
18. “Memorandum of Agreement Entered Into Between The Canadian Inter-Faith Conference and the Centennial Commission,” file 1, MG 28 I 76 vol. 1, NAC. This is the official document signed by both parties on 14 December 1965.
19. “Memorandum to the Board of Directors of the Centennial Commission on Interfaith Centennial Activities,” 14 October 1964, file 2, MG 28 I 76 vol. 11, NAC.
20. Letter from LeBlanc to Becker, 6 May 1966, file “Centennial Commission, general correspondence,” MG 28 I 76 vol. 13, NAC.
21. “Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors of the Canadian Interfaith Conference, 19 September 1966,” file 5, MG 28 I 76 vol. 2, NAC.

“Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors of the Canadian Interfaith Conference, 23 November 1967,” file 6, MG 28 I 76 vol. 2, NAC. These comments are taken from a summary report by Gilstorf within the minutes.

23. Letter from Becker to Fisher, 6 December 1966, file 1, MG 28 I 76 vol. 6, NAC.
24. These conclusions, based on the papers of the CIC and press clippings from across Canada, are tentative. Judging from Gilstorf’s sensitivity to both the Leadbeater and Quebec cases, it is highly unlikely that any noteworthy criticism of the CIC would have escaped her attention and, therefore, her very complete records. Some of this lack of interest may have simply been due to the overwhelming level of cultural activity in 1967, including, of course, the dazzling Expo ‘67 in Montreal. But even in 1965 and 1966 when the cultural pace of the nation was not as rushed, very few criticisms were aimed at the CIC. The only episodes of conflict or disagreement found were those involving Reverend Lloyd Leadbeater, some citizens of Quebec, the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists of Canada, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Of these, only the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Leadbeater seemed possibly concerned about the relationship between religion and the state.
25. On the amount of interest in the CIC at the local level and amongst the press, Lavy Becker’s closing comments at the last meeting of the Board of Directors are revealing. Becker complained that “it was difficult to understand why the only good Editorial was one we planted in the Province of Ontario.” As he

understood the movement of interfaith, “the whole country would have moved together but the masses didn’t respond. The Press can be criticized . . . we missed out on getting this across through the Press” (“Final Board Meeting, Canadian Interfaith Conference – 23 November 1967,” file 11, MG 28 I 76 vol. 2, NAC). Again, the cultural activity in 1967 may have provided too much competition for the CIC. Nonetheless, the fact that it was not often deemed newsworthy by a press that, during the 1960s, had been anxious to indulge in political scandal, suggests that the press saw no scandal in it. This point is reinforced even more strongly by the fact that the CIC tried hard for the interest of the press, and were not hiding their relations with the CCC.

26. See John Webster Grant, *The Canadian Experience of Church Union* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), 23.
27. For their interpretation see, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Univ. Press, 1996). Christie and Gauvreau do a thoroughly revisionist reading of a significant number of the “who’s who” of this period, including Beatrice Brigden, J.S. Woodsworth, William Ivens, and Samuel Chown, to prove, among other things, “the instrumental role of Protestant clergymen in formulating social legislation and transforming the scope and responsibilities of the modern state.” On the churches’ sense of responsibility for the moral health of the nation in the Presbyterian Church, see Richard Vaudry, *The Free Church in Victorian Canada, 1844-1861* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1989); and Brian Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1988). For its continued influence in the United Church, see Mary Vipond, “Canadian National Consciousness and the Formation of the United Church of Canada,” *Bulletin of the United Church of Canada* 24 (1975). For a more broadly sweeping but equally convincing account, see John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Burlington: Welch Publishing Company, Inc., 1988).
28. During the 1950s and 1960s there was still evidence to support this assumption. Judging from Canada’s love-affair with hockey, it was not insignificant, for example, that a Catholic priest, Father David Bauer, was coach of the Canadian national team for a number of years. Nor was it strange that the CBC show, “This Hour has Seven Days,” did a considerable amount of religious programming, or that a Reverend Georges-Henri Levesgue was a member of the Massey Commission. (These examples are taken from the Prologue of William Kilbourn, ed. *Religion in Canada: The Spiritual Development of a Nation* [Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968].) Finally, it was only in the early 1960s that the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec began to give up its control of education and social services in Quebec. Up to

that point, and perhaps for some time after, the separation of church and state would have made no sense in Quebec. For the Quebec situation, see John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, Ltd., 1993). William Kaplan's *State and Salvation: The Jehovah's Witnesses and Their Fight for Civil Rights* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1989) also provides numerous examples of the provincial government of Quebec's cooperation with and protection of the Roman Catholic Church.

29. The only notable exception to this rule that I have discovered was the negative response of the Jehovah's Witnesses to requests for involvement in the CIC in 1965 (see "Inter-Faith Conference Announces Centennial Plans," *The Montreal Star*, 16 December 1965, "Canadian Centennial Interfaith, printed materials," file 767e, box 77, CA, Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, Montreal). The article notes that of 25 faiths invited to the first CIC, the Jehovah's Witnesses was the only group to refuse to attend. Their reasons seem clear. Since the Witnesses have always very publicly separated themselves from nations and nationalisms by refusing to salute the flag and sing national anthems, it is little wonder that they also refused to link themselves directly to the Canadian state through the CIC. For an informative account of the trouble that their lack of national fervour has caused them in Canada (see Kaplan, *State and Salvation*).
30. F. Bullen to Gilstorf, 26 October 1967, file entitled "Baptists," MG 28 I 76 vol. 9, NAC.
31. This was certainly the case for the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada. Along with the Jehovah's Witnesses, they were one of the few organizations to reject involvement in the CIC, although they had originally been supportive. They withdrew their membership in December 1966, not because of the church/state issue, but because of their rejection of the ecumenical movement which, on the basis of statements condoning ecumenism by CCC officials, they felt the CIC was forwarding: "For the Centennial Committee to claim that religious aspects of the centennial represent a 'coming together' of the different faiths is not only misleading but untrue to the facts," they argued in their letter of resignation to Eve Gilstorf (C.A. Tipps to Eve Gilstorf, 30 December 1966, "Evangelical Baptists," MG 28 I 76 vol. 9, NAC).
32. See Philip LeBlanc and Arnold Edinborough, eds., *One Church, Two Nations?* (Don Mills: Longmans Canada Limited, 1968), 176.
33. Gilstorf to A. Macdonald, 5 October 1966, MG 28 I 76 vol. 6, NAC.

34. Memorandum from Gilstorf to Becker, 11 October 1966, MG 28 I 76 vol. 6, NAC.
35. One can correctly argue, of course, that persons in public positions in Quebec were much more sensitive to any such involvement than those outside of that province due to their unique political and cultural context. The point remains, however, that if they detected and rejected the intimate relations between the federal government and the CIC, anyone outside of that province who was concerned about the issue could have done so as well.
36. Speaking of the value of the interfaith dialogue that had been facilitated by the CIC, a committee recommended that “continuing such dialogue beyond the centennial year 1967 should be given considerable study” (Report of the Small Group Dialogue Committee, “Minutes of ‘After Conference Planning’ Meeting of 27 April 1966,” file 6, MG 28 I 76 vol. 2, NAC).
37. “Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Board of the Canadian Interfaith Conference, 15 February 1967,” file 16, MG 28 I 76 vol. 1, NAC. Significantly, Eve Gilstorf also shared these sentiments, and for concrete reasons. Already in 1966 she had been representing the CIC in discussions with other groups about the planning of the International Year on Human Rights in 1968. In her report to the Board of Directors of the CIC on September 19, 1966, Gilstorf included the following proclamation by the National Consultation for International Year on Human Rights: “The Canadian Interfaith Conference has proven to be an effective vehicle in furthering human rights in the religious field and should be extended beyond 1967.” Gilstorf and others thought that the CIC could play a major role in planning for the Year of Human Rights in Canada (“Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, 19 September 1966,” file 5, MG 28 I 76 vol. 2, NAC).
38. Executive Committee document EC 67-52, RG 69 vol. 392, NAC.
39. Any conference bringing together members of such diverse religious beliefs and traditions had its own potential for controversy, especially when Christian religious groups clearly dominated in number. Throughout the history of the CIC, though, no significant controversy arose. The Executive worked hard to make sure that this was the case, carefully choosing their language and avoiding favouritism. It is significant, on this point, that the Chairman of the Conference, Lavy Becker, was a member of the Jewish faith.
40. Address to the Canadian Interfaith Conference, 27 April 1966, file 6, MG 28 I 76 vol. 4, NAC. Keep in mind that Aykroyd was speaking to religious delegates who may have disagreed with his suggestion that national identities overrode religious ones.

41. Granatstein, *Canada, 1957-1967*, 304.
42. Bothwell, et al, *Canada Since 1945*, 424.