

This discussion paper is the text of a public address by
the Hon. H. P. ... on the ...

In this address, Mr. Stanfield draws on his personal experience in political leadership to argue the importance of having at least two truly national political parties, both of which strive for and obtain the trust of each region. What he says about the conditions for meeting this goal will be of interest to every Canadian who is concerned about his country.

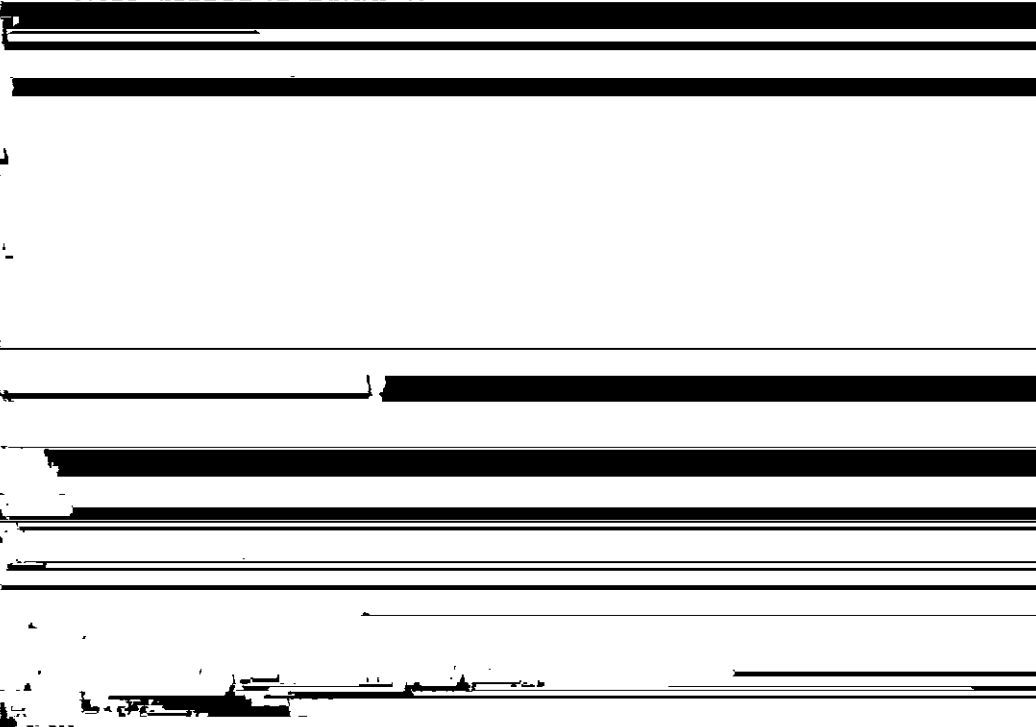
Peter M. Leslie
May 1985

My views about the Canadian political system may not be orthodox, but it will not surprise you to learn that I believe they are about right. ~~They have evolved over~~

it was supposed to be. That is clear enough. Canada is still evolving and will continue to evolve as long as we do not agree on what Canada is. Fortunately that is likely to be a long time hence. I consider our recent constitutional exercise to have been a serious mistake, but not a fatal one. I hope that we will resist future temptations to fasten our notions of our country upon our children.

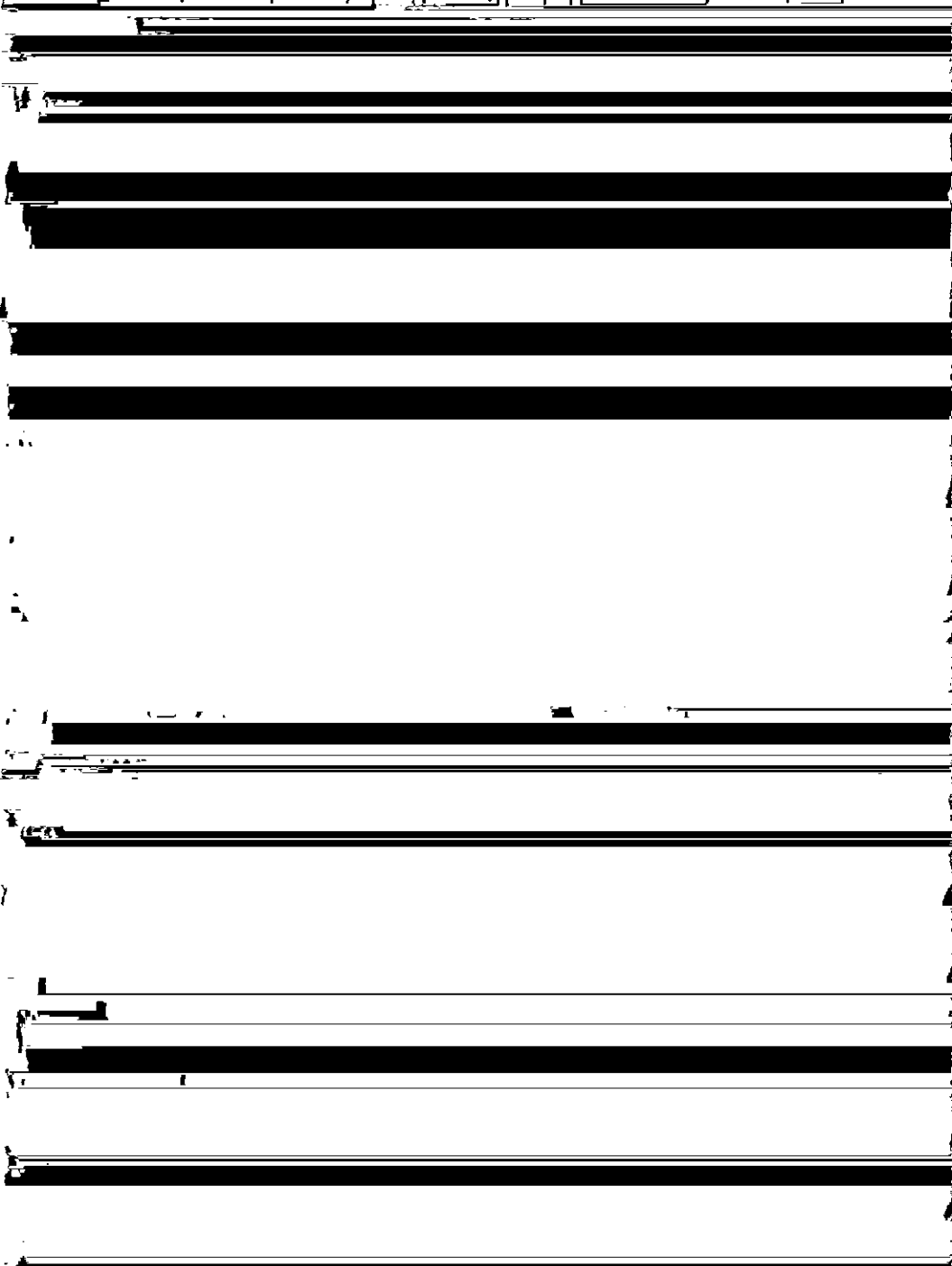
Of course, as Canadians we must face the problems of our country in our time and try to meet them. That will keep us busy enough. I assure you that I will not try to solve all our problems tonight. I will be discussing the nature of tensions peculiar to Canada and how we should cope with them.

For me the basic problem in Canadian politics is that Canadians boast about the diversity of Canada but do not accept this diversity or respect it. For me, statesmanship in Canada consists not of being tough and imposing on regions national policies which violate their profound aspirations and convictions, as in the case of the National Energy Program. For me, leadership consists rather in being tough and resourceful and pursuing

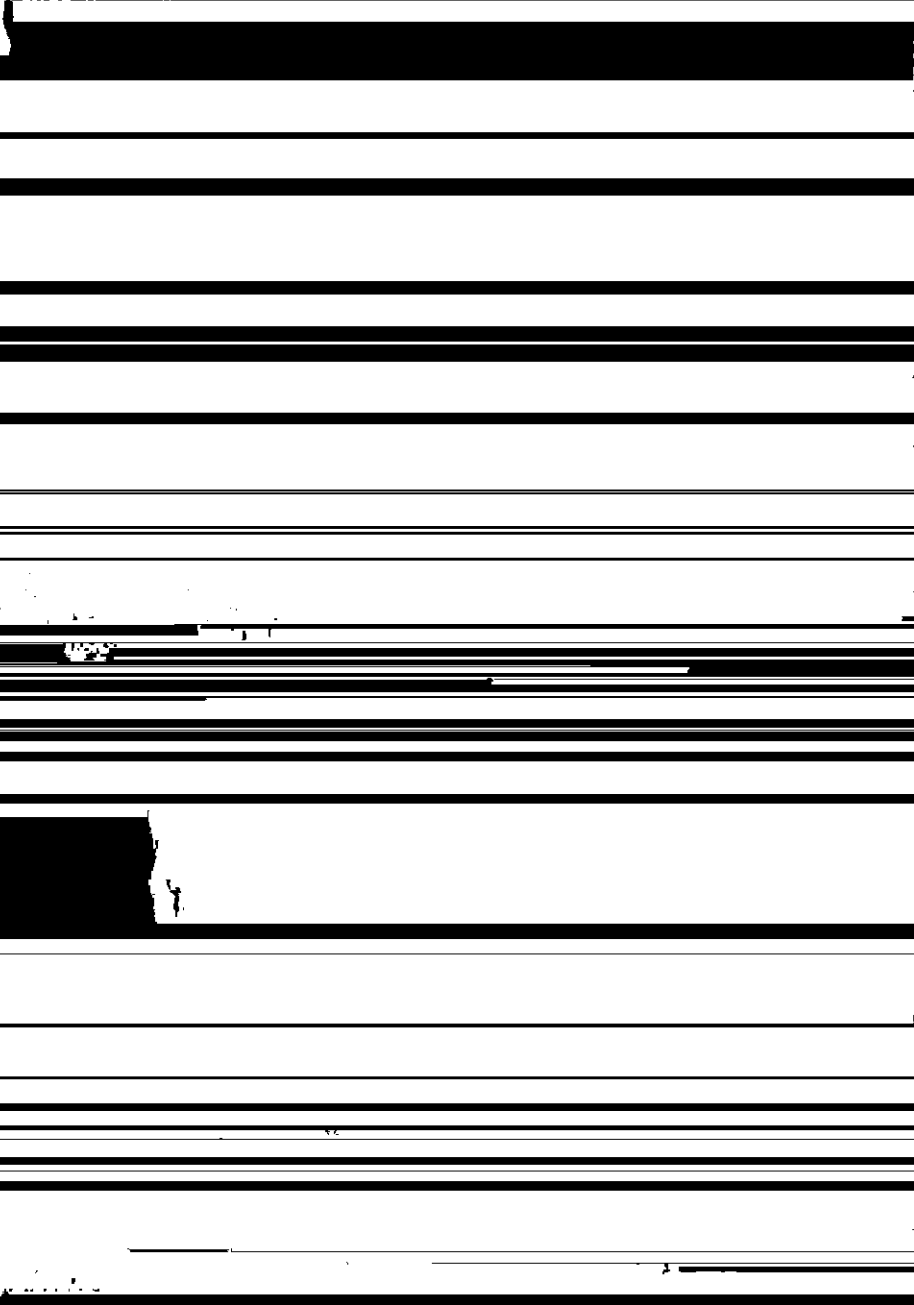


substantial cultural and linguistic unity; the economic

Some may ask why the will of the majority would not prevail in a democracy. Even in a small unitary state a majority must exercise restraint in imposing its views.



On the other hand the policy of official bilingualism adopted in the late 'sixties was bold and imaginative. It was not popular in most of the country and probably not the first choice of any region, but it was believed to be capable of building support in all regions. That judgment involved risks but I believe these were " "

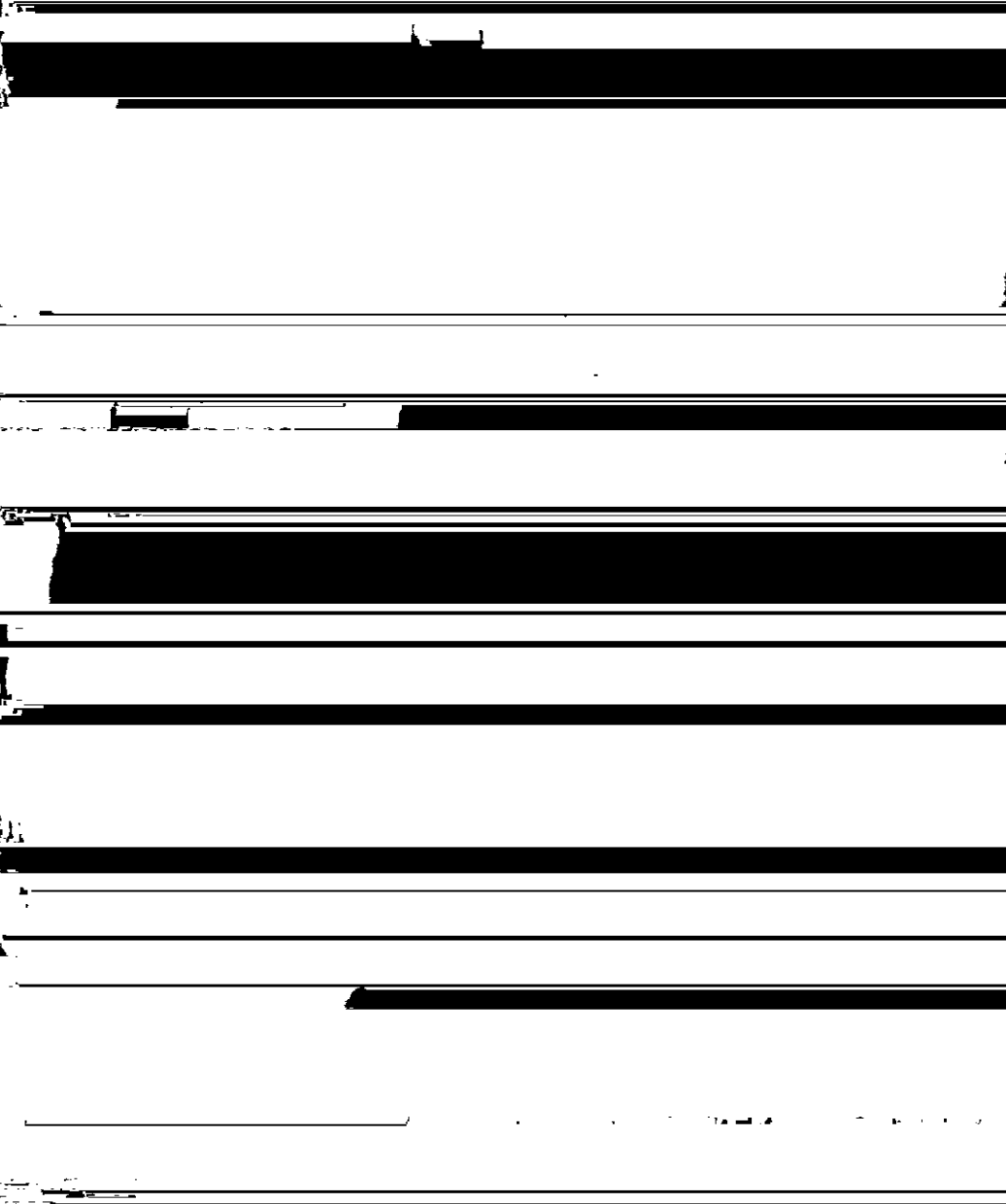


ments can do to individuals. We need to find a sensible way to limit what we do to Canadians who live in other regions.

struggle was not just between the western provinces and Ottawa. The eastern regions and their governments were very much on Ottawa's side, although their governments may well have stayed quiet about it. They were happy

constitutional settlement was not just a contrivance of its provincial government.

Even if we could eliminate all the egotism, posturing and verbosity of provincial premiers and Canadian prime ministers, we would still be confronted by a fundamental characteristic of our country. Canada contains a great diversity of regional interests and concerns and we have



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Queen's Studies on the Canadian Communities

ment of Canada, more important for Quebecers. I accept that. For Quebecers, as for other Canadians, the more important question is how Ottawa uses its powers.

I realize that Sir John A. Macdonald and his fellow

ministers of the central government, than

the difficulty in achieving a consensus, they have a point, but they are obscuring the problem by suggesting that Ottawa would perform better for the country if it had more power.

Many Canadians seem to believe that we need a stronger federal government to strengthen our economy. They suggest that the way things are Ottawa is unable to implement a national economic strategy. Let us be honest. If we are today in financial and economic diffi-

about Ottawa's involvement, an involvement that Ottawa eagerly sought, admirers of central power in Canada should be thankful that Ottawa does not have to pay the whole cost of these programs.

It is high time we put aside mythology that has grown

appreciate the significance of this and should exercise

helpful, is not likely to be a strong force in helping the country reach consensus on our problems.

But suppose we had at least two national political parties strongly committed to representing the whole country. This would mean at least two parties committed to retaining substantial support in each region of the country. What a world of difference this would make in our respect for diversity! Each such party would be

such a case should be opposed. It might well destroy

national party could establish a workable consensus.
We are, I believe, a long way from that in Canada.

~~I am not suggesting that national political parties will~~



example in the last couple of decades went through the

