

Football, Nationalism, and Protectionism:
The Federal Defence of the Canadian Football League

by

John Valentine

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Carleton University
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John Valentine

Abstract

In 1974, Canada's Liberal minority government acted to protect the Canadian Football League (CFL) from competition by introducing Bill C-22, which promised harsh penalties for anyone operating a football franchise connected to a foreign-based league or team. This legislation was the culmination of a series of measures by which the government had protected the CFL in the early 1960s and 1970s.

A number of factors combined to prompt government involvement. From its earliest days, Canadian football was a nationalist concern. The desire to create a distinctly Canadian pastime led early organizers to differentiate it from English rugby and American football by developing and defending distinctive rules for the game. Football associations developed as domestic rather than cross-border organizations, fostering a congruence of the national territory and the Canadian version of the game. The organizational structure of Canadian football reinforced the east-west axis of transcontinental transportation and communications infrastructure fostered by the state since Confederation. Team and regional rivalries became a staple of print and radio news and commentary, integrating football into the national discourse.

Following the Second World War, the identification of Canadian football with the Canadian nation intensified as televised games provided fans with more shared experiences of the only Canadian sports league. Fuelled by concerns about growing American cultural influence, nationalism was on the rise in Canada. This, accompanied by the building of the welfare state resulted in more government intervention than countenanced previously. The government introduced policies designed to protect Canadian culture, and, by extension, national identity. When unity became a concern, it

was felt that the CFL, and the Grey Cup game in particular, could be used to help unite east and west, French and English.

The federal government intervened to support the CFL on three occasions: first in 1962 when the CBC was forced to broadcast the Grey Cup game; secondly in 1972 when the CFL was considering American expansion; and finally in 1974 when the CFL was threatened by American competition. This football protectionist moment represents a high-water mark of nationalist state intervention in the postwar period.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

“It was so funny, I did introduce major pieces of legislation, but I’m not sure I had any which got my name in the papers as much as that one. . . I was almost kind of flabbergasted.”¹ The Honourable Marc Lalonde, an elected Member of Parliament for more than a decade who held cabinet portfolios as Minister of Health, Minister of Justice, Minister of Energy, and Minister of Finance, was involved in many controversial political issues. He was a member of cabinet during the October Crisis and the patriation of the constitution. He was Minister of Finance when wage and price controls were introduced to combat rampant inflation, Minister of Health when radical health care reforms were announced, and Minister of Energy when the controversial National Energy Program was implemented. Yet none of these initiatives generated as much publicity as his sponsorship of protectionist legislation for Canadian professional football.

In 1974 Canada’s Liberal minority government introduced a bill designed to protect the Canadian Football League (CFL) from competition. It threatened stiff penalties for anyone who operated a football team in Canada having any connection with an American team or league. The government’s legislation was the last in a series of increasingly interventionist measures it took to assist the Canadian Football League between 1962 and 1974. In 1962 the government acted to ensure that all Canadians could watch the Grey Cup on television as such viewing was determined to be in the national interest. In 1972 the government announced a policy intended to prevent the CFL from expanding into the United States to ensure that this national cultural institution remained Canadian. Finally,

¹ Sean Fitz-Gerald, “Lesser Known Bills,” *National Post*, February 8, 2008, B11.

in 1974 the government introduced Bill C-22: An Act Respecting Canadian Professional Football, which was designed to prevent an American professional football league from establishing a franchise in Canada.

This dissertation explores the relationship between professional football and other forces in Canadian society over time, showing how they converged in a particular fashion to produce government intervention on behalf of the CFL in the early 1960s and 1970s. A particular conjuncture of causal factors prompted the government to act according to the rationale that protecting the CFL was critical to the national interest. This research explains the government's unprecedented interventions by contextualizing them historically within both the long-term relationship of football and nationalism and certain shorter-term but intensifying cultural, economic and political conditions of the time. One factor was a long-term issue that had developed over the previous century. Two others were factors specific to the postwar period. The last were in play for a short time immediately prior to the interventions.

Canadian Football developed historically in conjunction with Canada, acquiring over time a distinctive identity and a territorial configuration that associated it closely with the nation. This study begins by presenting a brief history of Canadian football designed to demonstrate how the game grew to be seen as congruent with the nation. Sport is often a source of national pride and identity, and such was the case with Canadian football. From the first games in 1861, Canadian football has had nationalist overtones. The game evolved from English rugby and developed independently in

Canada during the Confederation era of nation-building.² Players and promoters made a concerted effort to maintain Canadian football as a game with different rules from the British or American versions. The transformation of an imported game into an indigenous game with a social agenda to link sport to citizenship and identity was not uncommon. Rugby evolved into Gaelic football in Ireland, Australian Rules football in Australia and Canadian football in Canada. These three derivatives emerged just as these British dependencies were displaying aspirations to nationhood.³

Canadians used the sport to signal their autonomy from Britain, but soon became more concerned with resisting the continental influence of the United States. The game was organized on an east-west axis congruent with the communication and transportation network that was supported by the state in the national interest. The media delivered accounts of local rivalries and national championships, integrating football into the national discourse and providing Canadians with common collective experiences. Community-ownership of teams gave football a populist character that further bonded the local with the national.⁴ The Grey Cup game, the national championship of Canadian

² See J. Andrew Ross, *Joining the Clubs: The Business of the National Hockey League to 1945* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), especially the introduction, for a good description of the institutionalization of sport at this time.

³ The Irish struggled for Home Rule in the 1880s and the game of Gaelic football was codified in 1887. Canadian Confederation was achieved in 1867 just a few years after the first games of Canadian football. Australian Rules football appeared in 1858 while responsible government was spreading throughout the states between 1855 and 1859.

⁴ Bruce Kidd suggests that during the interwar period the National Hockey League transitioned from community representation to a commercial enterprise. He argues that Canadian football was able to retain its attachment to community. See Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 191. Stephen Brunt argues that this attachment to community continues to be strong and resulted in a revitalization of interest in the CFL. See Stephen Brunt, "The Changing Face of Sport: From Hometown Heroes to Supermen and Superwomen," in *The Sport We Want: Essays on Current Issues*

football first played in 1909, evolved into a national spectacle, a ritual that brought Canadians together on an annual basis.

With Canada's national sport of hockey increasingly under American influence during the 1960s, the Canadian Football League (CFL) could be seen as fulfilling an important function as a distinctively Canadian institution and tradition. The CFL became the lone professional sporting league featuring only Canadian-based teams. It is also the professional sports league with the highest number of franchises based in Canada. Canadian football became an identity marker that nationalists used to define the country and to differentiate it from other nations, one deemed all the more authentic for its populist roots. Two chapters of this thesis are devoted to tracing the development of this association of Canadian football with national identity to demonstrate how by the 1960s it had become conventional wisdom that was used to justify government protectionism. The federal government intervened when the CFL was threatened because the game represented the nation.

The post-Second World War period saw the emergence of two interrelated medium-term factors, increased state intervention and a burgeoning nationalism, that helped create the conditions in which government intervention on behalf of the CFL became possible. First, the state was increasingly activist in this period. The Canadian state had gained experience and confidence in being more interventionist through directing the war effort. Keynesian economic ideas were increasingly influential in the postwar era, providing an intellectual rationale for greater government intervention.

These changes made it easier for the Canadian state to develop social programs and support for Canadian cultural production. The main components of the Canadian welfare state were in place by the late 1960s. Government intervention was by this time less controversial and more likely than ever before.

State intervention was supported by a leftward trend in politics that saw the state as a necessary counterweight to capitalist power. National independence depended upon an activist state; the state depended upon nationalism to legitimize its sovereignty. The 1960s and early 1970s were a period of peak nationalism in Canada. The state was threatened both externally by Americanization and internally by a national unity crisis. Pressure on the government to intervene in the national interest intensified. The government responded by becoming a more activist nationalist actor. Canada's proximity to the United States, its comparatively small population, and its similar cultural characteristics made the threat of American cultural domination a perennial concern. In the 1960s nationalist fears about American economic and cultural imperialism flourished. At the same time, Quebec separatism was on the rise, raising the possibility that Canada would break up. While the government at first took no action to placate economic nationalism, it was compelled by cultural nationalism to extend state intervention beyond social programs into the realm of culture. The government introduced policies designed to encourage Canadian cultural producers and protect them from American competition. New Quebec activism in the field, represented by its creation of a Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1961, was a further prompt to federal action.

At first federal cultural policies focused on high culture, but by the 1960s cultural policies broadened to include various forms of popular culture. State involvement in sport

was initially linked to the development of fitness, but the realization that sport was a critical component of national culture soon followed.⁵ Intervention in a professional spectator sport was a logical next step. In its cultural policies the government acted to ensure access to indigenous content. Bill C-22: the Football Bill went further by banning outright foreign content and competition.

The remaining causal factors were short-term products of immediate circumstances that were different for each of the three instances of intervention. In 1962 the government faced an incongruous situation in which the Grey Cup, the national championship of a major spectator sport, would not be broadcast to all Canadians. It intervened to rectify the situation. The CFL was popular among Canadians, so while acting in the national interest the government also had its own popularity and an upcoming election in mind.

By the time the Liberal government intervened in 1972 the government had grown accustomed to supporting other areas of popular culture to counter increasing Americanization. From 1972 to 1974 the minority Liberal government was dependent on the support of the left-of-centre New Democratic Party (NDP). The NDP has nationalist sympathies and social democratic principles that encouraged an activist state. After years of shying away from any policy response to economic nationalist pressures, the Liberals appeased the NDP with interventionist economic initiatives.

The Liberals' 1974 football legislation could similarly be counted on to win the NDP's support. Moreover, the CFL remained popular and the government no doubt

⁵ Donald Macintosh, Tom Bidecki, and C.E.S. Franks, *Sport and Politics in Canada: Federal Government Involvement since 1961* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988), 4.

calculated that defending it would be to its political advantage. An election was on the horizon when Bill C-22 was proposed, and the Liberals desired more seats in Western Canada, where the CFL was popular.

These three moments of intervention represented the culmination of a long-term trend, the identification of the CFL with the nation, along with medium-term trends, greater state intervention and a rising nationalism, that distinguished the 1960s and early 1970s. These trends created general conditions in which government intervention on behalf of the CFL became possible. On three different occasions immediate events generated a crisis affecting the CFL to which the federal government responded by intervening to protect the national interest.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

This section explains the concepts that are critical to the argument of this study. Scholarship that bears upon this topic will be described in detail in a literature review in the chapter that follows. It is discussed here only when relevant to this study's conceptual framework.

As the discussion of causal factors above suggest, this study is fundamentally historical in conception. History is a mode of understanding that does not seek to explain human behaviours with the use of grand theories. History explains objects of inquiry as the products of a variety of factors interacting over time. It is attuned to the uniqueness of particular historical contexts, appreciating that disparate factors are in play with varying intensity in different times and places. To understand any phenomenon, these particularities need to be examined and understood.

One potential danger in history's particularist approach is losing sight of how a particular case is related to others. To offset this potential concern it is helpful to draw on other disciplinary perspectives. This study supplements its historical approach with insights into its subject matter derived from a variety of different fields of scholarship. The inherent interdisciplinarity evident in this research is derived from the Canadian Studies tradition of critical inquiry. Canadian Studies began as a movement for indigenous knowledge generation in the nationalistic time period covered by this study. It has since evolved into the critical study of Canadian nationalism, the very phenomenon that gave it birth. A variety of concepts, drawn from the various disciplines that converge in Canadian studies, are central to the analysis of this study. They derive from the fields of political science, political economy, and communication studies. These concepts are applied to make the chronological narrative presented below more critical and analytical.

The nature and origins of nations has long been a key question in the discipline of political science. While the natural home of nationalism studies is more in political science than elsewhere, other disciplines, including sociology, history, and anthropology are also concerned with nationalism. Like many other contemporary fields of study, it has become an interdisciplinary field. Nationalism theory seeks to understand the origins and nature of nations and the accompanying ideology of nationalism.

Nationalism sees the world as naturally divided by history and culture into distinct communities called nations. Hobsbawm and Gellner use the term nationalism to refer to a

principle which holds that “the political and national unit should be congruent.”⁶

Nationalism seeks in culture those qualities that make a people distinct. Political implications, such as the principle of self-determination of peoples, follow, legitimating the power of the state with the consent of the nation in the idealized formation of the nation-state. The logic of this formulation is compelling, so much so that its radical simplification of demographic and geographical facts on the ground is often ignored.

As suggested above, nationalism assigns political significance to cultural characteristics. Many theorists discuss the significance of history to national identity.⁷ Canadian nationalists began searching for a national identity to justify Canada’s existence even prior to the union of its constituent provinces in 1867. Lacking a common culture, ethnicity, or national history, Canada struggled to emulate Western European models of nation. The challenges confronting this project, such as the aforementioned American influence and Quebec sectionalism, have prompted state action to promote a cultural solidarity that in turn legitimates the sovereignty of the state. Shared experiences become over time collective memories that reinforce a sense of belonging. By the 1960s these had been developing for more than a century, making a close association of football and nation a feature of Canadian collective memory.

Nationalism theory stresses that the nation relies on a shared sense of space as well as a shared sense of time. The creation of the modern Canadian state involved absorbing

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 9; Ernest Gellner, *Nations & Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

⁷ Anthony Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1979); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London, Verso, 1991); Ernest Renan, *What is a Nation?* (Toronto: Tapir Press, 1996).

vast new territories and consolidating them into a transcontinental dominion. The government supported the development of transportation and communications infrastructure to consolidate its control over its territory. In its first century Canadian football also expanded to occupy the Canadian territory. In this way, space as well as time is important to understand the national significance of Canadian football.

Nationalism theory also emphasizes the discursive quality of the nation. National myths, symbols, and narratives, from the spectacular to the banal, are circulated in the public sphere to characterize the nation and maintain a popular identification with it.⁸ The fluidity of this discourse allows concepts of shared space and time central to national identity to be revised in accord with changing contemporary circumstances. Some cultural producers are more influential than others in this process. Much of the literature on nationalism focuses on the role of intellectuals in crafting the myths, symbols and narratives that invoke feelings of collective belonging. The case of football differs in that it was a form of popular culture and its most vocal proponents, sportswriters, are not usually considered intellectuals.⁹

While sport does have the ability to transcend societal barriers and attract the attention of large parts of the population regardless of class, race, ethnicity and gender, Canadian football is exclusive in many ways. The absence of a professional team in Atlantic Canada excluded based on region. There seemed to exist a rural-urban divide

⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

⁹ Breuilly and Gellner, for example, describe the role of artists, critics and scholars in the arts and letters who represent and theorize national identity in various traditional forms of high culture. See John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.

which resulted in Canadian football being more popular in smaller centres. Sports tended to be organized, watched, played, and controlled by members of the dominant culture which naturalized exclusion based on class, race, ethnicity and sex.

Organized sport was largely a male preserve, invented by men for men. Success in most forms of sport depended on stereotypical masculine traits such as physical strength, size, speed, and aggression. Women were disadvantaged in areas emphasizing these physical traits. This served to exclude most women as well as some men. Football socialized participants in a way that privileged masculinity and legitimized existing patriarchal power. Connell argues that associating masculinity with sport was a deliberate political strategy to maintain masculine dominance.¹⁰ The form of masculinity that was celebrated in football was very traditional and protected. This exclusion included not only participating but also coaching and organizing. Women were not formally excluded from watching football, but spectatorship tended to be dominated by men.

Other traditionally masculine sports such as hockey, rugby, and lacrosse have attracted female participants. In contrast, women are vastly under-represented as participants in football. Just as Canadian football was used to differentiate Canada from the US and Britain, the game differentiated men from women, retaining and reproducing the patriarchal order. Through a sport such as football, the existing gender order is made to appear natural as opposed to socially constructed.¹¹

¹⁰ Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 30.

¹¹ For more on this see Mariah Burton Nelson, *The Stronger Women Get, the More Men Love Football* (New York: Avon Books, 1994); Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); M. Ann Hall, "Cultural Struggle and Resistance: Gender, History, and Canadian Sport," in *Sport and Gender in Canada*, 2nd ed., eds. Kevin

Gender scholars see nation-building as primarily a masculine enterprise.¹² Gender relations, like class relations and race relations, are about power. Gender roles in a patriarchal society accord value and influence to men who are appropriately masculine, based on their performance of gender. Mary Louise Adams makes the point that national sports afford men “an opportunity to represent the nation in a way not open to women.”¹³ Consider Anderson’s idea of national community being formed by the shared experiences related to sport. This specific imagined community was exclusively male and naturalized the nation as masculine. The media deals that fund sport, by selling masculine products to males, communicate national stories to all citizens concerning who has power in society. It is natural to imagine a male sporting network, underwritten by a primarily male business community, supported by powerful male politicians, as analogous with a male-dominated body politic. As Robidoux points out, no form of nationalism will include everyone.¹⁴ The national identity football contributed to at this time reflected Canada’s patriarchal history. The predominantly male constellation of media, businesses, sponsors,

Young and Philip White, 56-74 (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2007); Kevin Wamsley, “The Public Importance of Men and the Importance of Public Men: Sport and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Canada,” in *Sport and Gender in Canada*, 2nd ed., eds. Kevin Young and Philip White, 75-91 (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2007); Kristi Allain, “‘Real Fast and Tough’: The Construction of Canadian Hockey Masculinity,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 25, no. 4 (December 2008).

¹² Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 42; John Nauright and Phil White, “Nostalgia, Community, and Nation: Professional Hockey and Football in Canada,” *Avante* 2, no. 3 (1996), 25; Connell, *Masculinities*, xvi.

¹³ Mary Louise Adams, “The Game of Whose Lives: Gender, Race, and Entitlement in Canada’s National Game,” in *Artificial Ice*, eds. David Whitson and Richard Gruneau (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006), 74.

¹⁴ Michael A. Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, 115, no. 456 (Spring 2002), 222.

and political connections that supported the sport will be referred to as a “masculine power network.”

While nationalism theory offers many valuable insights, it is reliant on intangible ideas, beliefs, and communications processes that are difficult to document. It also deals in generalizations that may not apply in all cases. Political economy offers a corrective to these tendencies. It focuses on concrete institutions, policies, and material conditions and makes allowances for the actions of individuals in shaping the course of history.¹⁵

Political economy examines the relationships between economic, political and legal systems and policies and how they take different forms under different conditions. Wallace Clement suggests that political economy, “[r]ather than seeking explanations through narrowly constructed disciplines, . . . tries to build from a totality which includes the political, economic, social, and cultural, where the whole is greater than its parts.”¹⁶ Clement and Glen Williams further argue that political economy is focused on “processes whereby social change is located in the historical interaction of the economic, political, cultural, and ideological moments of social life, with the dynamic rooted in socio-economic conflict.”¹⁷ At the heart of political economy is an interest in economic, political and cultural struggle that seeks to place social change in historical perspective.¹⁸

¹⁵ Wallace Clement, “Introduction: Whither the New Canadian Political Economy?” in *Understanding Canada: Building on the New Canadian Political Economy*, ed. Wallace Clement (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ Wallace Clement and Glen Williams, “Introduction” in *The New Canadian Political Economy*, ed. Wallace Clement and Glen Williams (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 7.

¹⁸ Clement argues that the best of political economy has incorporated history since it seeks to locate the motion of society in the forces of change as production and reproduction transform it. It seeks out

Political economy and related concepts such as dependency theory, cultural imperialism, continentalism, domination and resistance have influenced this research. In the Canadian context they converge to focus on Canada's struggle to preserve its independence in the face of powerful American influences and the consequent elaboration of a field of scholarship known as dependency theory.

Dependency theory can be traced back to the seminal work of Harold Innis and John Porter, and includes more recently the work of Daniel Drache and Wallace Clement.¹⁹ Innis was the first theorist to draw attention to how Canada's staple economy resulted in a dependence on first France, then Britain, and finally the United States.²⁰ He proposed this relationship as an economic one, but recognized that it had political and cultural implications, particularly in the area of communications. In his wake came a host of studies elaborating on various facets of Canadian dependency and their implications. Dependency theory asserts that Canadian interests have systematically been subordinated to the interest of dominant metropolises and that this fundamental economic condition is

tensions and contradictions within society that produce struggles and resistance to the prevailing order. This point is echoed by Graham Murdock and Peter Golding. See Clement, "Introduction," 4; Graham Murdock and Peter Golding, "Culture, Communications, and Political Economy" in *Mass Media and Society*, ed. James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (London: Arnold, 2005), 61.

¹⁹ Harold Innis, *Empire and Communication* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1950); Harold Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951 reprinted 1995); John Porter, *Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965); Daniel Drache and Wallace Clement, ed. *The New Practical Guide to Canadian Political Economy* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985).

²⁰ Richard Collins, "The Metaphor of Dependency and Canadian Communications: The Legacy of Harold Innis," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 12, no. 1 (1986), 2.

reinforced by cultural, social, and political factors that combine to entrench Canada's dependent situation.²¹

The history of popular culture in Canada conforms with dependency theory's interpretation of domination by a richer, stronger, more populous society.²² Cultural imperialism is defined by Tomlinson as "a form of domination . . . not just in the political and economic spheres but also over those practices by which collectivities make sense of their lives."²³ Cultural imperialism makes it difficult for people to fashion their own representations of themselves and their own experiences. In North America, American cultural imperialism was the result of the inexorable logic of continental cultural economics. Transportation and communications improvements made it progressively easier and cheaper to distribute cultural goods. American producers had a national market ten times the size of Canada. More could be invested in production and greater profits could still be enjoyed compared to Canadian competitors who had a relatively low-density, highly dispersed domestic markets and higher distribution costs. Having already profited on their original investment in their domestic market, Americans could sell their well-made goods into Canada for a fraction of what it would cost a Canadian producer to duplicate them. Not surprisingly, Canadian products often seemed inferior in comparison.

²¹ Richards and Pratt include geography and climate as factors. See John Richards and Larry Pratt, *Prairie Capitalism* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1979).

²² Ted Magder, "Taking Culture Seriously: A Political Economy of Communications," in *The New Canadian Political Economy*, ed. Wallace Clement and Glen Williams (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

²³ John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1991), 7.

When they were made, distribution was a challenge in a system set up to move American product.

Nevertheless, nationalism dictated that Canada must have its own culture. Canadian cultural nationalism can be understood, at one level, as symbolic protection from, and resistance to, American domination. According to anthropologist Frank Manning, “[d]omination has attracted far more attention than resistance.”²⁴ This research focuses on a previously overlooked example of resistance.

Technological nationalism, is another concept that is helpful in understanding Canadian football protectionism.²⁵ Technological nationalism is a convergence point of various strains of scholarship. Harold Innis might well be the most influential figure in Canadian Studies. Not only was his work significant to the development of Canadian political economy, it also stimulated a significant strain of Canadian historiography and a tradition of Canadian communications thought. Innis traced how the axis of trade involved in extracting staple resources from early Canada caused the development of an east-west transportation and communications network. This insight was the origin of what would come to be known as the Laurentian thesis, which interpreted Canadian history as an ongoing process of continuous exploitation of the hinterland through updating the technology of the east-west infrastructure. Canoe routes gave way to canals, which were in turn followed by railway and telegraph, then radio and television

²⁴ Frank Manning, “Reversible Resistance: Canadian Popular Culture and the American Other,” in *The Beaver Bites Back: American Popular Culture in Canada*, ed. David Flaherty and Frank Manning (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 7.

²⁵ Maurice Charland, “Technological Nationalism,” *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 10, no. 1 (1986).

networks. Much of the time state intervention was required to implement a Canadian version of the new technology in the face of American competition. In this interpretation infrastructure was not just a theme in Canada's historical development, it came to constitute the nation.

In his later scholarship Innis built on his pioneering work in Canadian political economy to develop a grand theory of world history in which the emergence, character and viability of various empires was attributed to the communications technologies on which they relied. This work influenced successor scholars from Northrop Frye to Marshall McLuhan, giving rise to what came to be regarded as a distinct Canadian school of communications thought. Its basic premise, that forms of communication shape society, is the central concern of Maurice Charland's critique of "technological nationalism," a Canadian tradition of nationalist thought that places its faith in the use of technology to forge a nation.²⁶

Charland does not deny that the east-west technology axis is a fact of Canadian history, but he does ask whether it is an effective counterweight to dependency. He questioned the value of a national identity determined by technology rather than by culture, dismissing it as a content-free reliance on the medium as opposed to the message.²⁷ Moreover, communications technologies can be both a blessing and a curse. While they facilitate the dissemination of Canadian culture domestically, they

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

simultaneously expedite the importation of foreign culture.²⁸

However, other commentators have found merit in this approach. If the nation is, as nationalism theorists contend, a discursive construct, then it depends upon internal communication for its existence. Communications channels may not be sufficient, but they are a necessary precondition for national community. Once created, the possibility exists for meaningful content to be disseminated.²⁹ Canadian football provided this type of content. It was dependent on constructions both tangible (the state's east-west infrastructure) and discursive (nationalism as content of the media within that infrastructure). Moreover, as we shall see, football itself developed an organizational structure that replicated and reinforced Canada's east-west axis as well as the type of nationalist content required to make the broader infrastructure work in the national interest.

In short, this study relates to and extends a central issue in Canadian Studies, the question of Canada's viability as a nation in the face of powerful American economic and cultural influences. It interprets Canadian football as a cultural form that offsets dependency by fulfilling three of the main criteria for nation building: a sense of a shared past, occupation of a territory, and a focal point of collective discourse. By providing valuable popular content for the nation, it transcended the limitations of technological nationalism, justifying government intervention in its defence at a moment of peak nationalism.

²⁸ Robert E. Babe, *Telecommunications in Canada: Technology, Industry, and Government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

²⁹ Charland, "Technological Nationalism."

1.2 Methodology: Sources

Historical evidence is partial and biased. This work is limited by the traces of the past that are available to the researcher, and also intermediaries—other historians, archivists and witnesses—who have recorded the past.³⁰ All historical research has limitations, such as the availability and biases of documentary sources, the reliability of oral sources, and the subjectivity of the researcher. The researcher must consciously engage and continually question the origin and purpose of these documents and materials.³¹ Nevertheless, the historical method operates on the premise that primary research can generate reliable information that can be pieced together to reconstruct a fair approximation of what happened in the past.

Collections at Library and Archives Canada were instrumental in this research project. The personal papers of the ministers directly involved, the Honourable John Munro and the Honourable Marc Lalonde, were consulted, as well as the papers of the Right Honourable Joe Clark. Other collections consulted include minutes from cabinet meetings, speeches, personal letters, debates from the House of Commons, confidential memos, and annual reports from the CFL. The personal papers from the Commissioner of the CFL, Jake Gaudaur, and CFL Annual Reports for each of the years leading up to the proposal of the football bill provided insight into what was taking place in the CFL at

³⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2001); Carly Adams, “Historical Methods and Traces of the Past: Embracing the Complexities and Engaging in Reflexivity,” in *Qualitative Research on Sport and Physical Culture*, ed. Kevin Young and Michael Atkinson (e-book: Emerald, 2012), 4.

³¹ Douglas Booth, *The Field: Truth and Fiction in Sport History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 87.

that time. The archives at McGill University were also consulted for information about the early days of Canadian football.

Archival research yields information from what was once captured on paper. Carly Adams refers to archives as “the bread and butter” of historical work.³² However, she adds, researchers need to be aware of the gaps and omissions as archives serve as spaces for preservation and exclusion.³³ Archival records can mislead by representing particular interests while leaving others unvoiced. Jake Gaudaur’s annual reports on the Canadian Football League are an example. The primary audience for the reports was team administrators. Like Gaudaur they had a vested interest in the survival of the league and would benefit from government support. However, these reports provide the only source of information on the backroom goings-on in the CFL aside from the odd newspaper account.

Quantitative evidence from polls, surveys and television ratings was used to gauge Canadians’ interest in and opinions on football issues. Qualitative sources such as those produced by journalists and politicians have been consulted, taking into account their partisan and subjective biases. In an effort to find the views of other groups in Canada, letters to newspapers and comments to a call-in radio show were examined. These forms of evidence provide some insight into what Canadian were thinking, but their representativeness is limited.

³² Adams, “Historical Methods,” 4.

³³ Ibid., 5.

This dissertation also relies heavily on research gathered from newspapers and periodicals. The sources were used to piece together important details regarding the evolution of Canadian football dating back to the 1880s. They were also important sources for the early 1970s when the football bill was introduced. Sports columnists such as Dick Beddoes and Christie Blatchford covered the story almost daily. Newspapers and radio stations commissioned surveys to gauge public support for the government's policy, and these comprise another valuable source. As Adams indicates, newspapers constitute arguably the most common form of mass communication examined by historians of sport. Newspaper articles, letters, and editorials "offer insights into political, cultural, and social thinking, conventions and values of the time."³⁴ However, as Roberto Franzosi cautions, they are produced with the intention of selling a product to an audience.³⁵ Newspapers are also sites of ideological power. Ideological and political leanings, for example, must be considered when employing newspaper content as historical evidence.

The Honourable Marc Lalonde, the Minister responsible for the Football Bill, was interviewed for his impressions of the events of the early 1970s, particularly his role in sponsoring the football bill. The other principal figures involved in the Football Bill have since died. Peripheral figures such as journalists who commented on it are still alive, but their writings at the time are a more dependable source than their memories of events.

Oral history can make great contributions to research, but also has weaknesses and biases. Interviews are subject to problems of recall, misperception and incorrect

³⁴ Ibid., 5.

³⁵ Roberto Franzosi, "The Press as Source of Socio-historical Data: Issues in the Methodology of Data Collection from Newspapers," *Historical Methods* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1987), 6.

knowledge.³⁶ Human memory can be unreliable, shaped by present-day concerns and perspectives, and tends to impose, retrospectively, a coherence and purpose on events that they may not have had at the time. Interviewers can influence the information received in an interview and leading or emotional questions may bias the data. However, oral history can also complement data collected from other sources in unexpected ways. Historian Alessandro Portelli believes that “oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed that were doing, and now what they think they did.”³⁷

Secondary sources have been invaluable for this study and are blended with primary sources throughout. The section of this study that reconstructs the history of Canadian football from its beginnings to the mid-twentieth century (Chapter 3) relies heavily on secondary sources for basic factual information. Reconstructing this entire period through primary sources was not possible given the amount of research that would have been required. Given the existence of sufficient information in secondary sources, it would have also been an unnecessary duplication of effort. This study’s original contribution for that period is to reinterpret existing sport history scholarship through the lens of nationalism, dependency, and technological nationalism, thereby putting football at the centre of a discourse from which it has previously been largely excluded. Though no previous study has addressed Canadian football protectionism, various avenues of

³⁶ Ian James and Chris Gratton, *Research Methods for Sports Studies*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2015), 179.

³⁷ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 50.

inquiry, described above, converge in this topic. Explaining the causal factors in play in this case has involved synthesizing information, themes and conclusions from related but distinct fields of scholarship. These fields, described in the “conceptual framework” section above, will, as already mentioned, be elaborated upon in a literature review in the next chapter.

Since perfect objectivity is an unattainable ideal, a confession of authorial bias may serve to correct for its intrusion into the analysis that follows. The author is a Canadian who feels a sense of loyalty and affection for his country yet is inoculated somewhat against the more ambitious claims of nationalism by a critical distance developed through scholarly study of it. He was not politically conscious of or involved in any of the events described in this study at the time they unfolded. On the other hand, he is a student of Canadian sports history who teaches in the field, and to that extent has a special interest in this material. In terms of political philosophy, or, less pretentiously, his position on the political spectrum, the author is sympathetic to Keynesianism and the state intervention rationalized by it yet finds this particular instance of intervention into a private sector professional sport difficult to justify. Indeed, it was the anomalous character of this case that originally sparked the author’s interest in it.

1.3 Chapter Outline

The next chapter, Chapter Two, reviews the pertinent secondary literature mentioned above, discussing the scholarship on Canadian sport, nationalism, and public policy. Chapter Three traces the evolution of Canadian football to demonstrate how the sport came to occupy the Canadian territory and represent the nation. This is followed by

three chapters, each of which addresses one of the three moments—in 1962, 1972 and 1974—when the Canadian federal government became involved in the protection of Canadian football. A concluding chapter briefly describes the aftermath of Bill C-22 and examines why the federal government intervened in professional football.

While the study of sport and public policy has become more common, research on professional football in Canada is still relatively rare. This is one of just a few such scholarly studies, and the only one to examine the Canadian government's intervention to protect domestic professional football. However, there has been substantial research completed to date on the various causal factors enumerated above: the wellsprings and history of Canadian nationalism, the rise of the welfare state and government intervention, the origins and growth of cultural policy, and the history of sport, including federal sport policy.³⁸ The federal government's intervention on behalf of the CFL merits attention as a unique case in which all of these themes converge. Indeed, it is possible to

³⁸ On Canadian nationalism see Peter Russell, ed., *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1966); Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, ed., *Canadas of the Mind* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007). On the rise of the welfare state see Raymond B. Blake and Jeff Keshen ed., *Social Welfare Policy in Canada: Historical Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1995); Raymond B. Blake, Penny Bryden, and J. Frank Strain, *Welfare State in Canada: Past, Present, and Future* (Concord, Ont. Irwin Pub., 1997). On economic intervention see Kenneth Norrie, Douglas O'ram, and J.C. Herbert Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 4th ed., (Toronto: Nelson, 2008); Geoffrey Hale, *Uneasy Partnership: The Politics of Business and Government in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Joe Martin, *Relentless Change: A History of Canadian Business* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). On cultural intervention see Bernard Ostry, *The Cultural Connection: An Essay on Culture and Governmental Policy in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978); Paul Audley, *Canada's Cultural Industries: Broadcasting, Publishing, Records and Film* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Publishers, 1983); Joel Smith, ed., *Media Policy, National Identity and Citizenry in Changing Democratic Societies* (Durham, N.C.: Canadian Studies Centre, Duke University Press, 1998); John Foote, *Federal Cultural Policy in Canada* (Hull: Strategic Policy and Research Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage, 2003). On Canadian sport history see Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport 1807-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987); Kidd, *The Struggle*; Colin Howell, *Blood Sweat and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2005). On Sport Policy in Canada see Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*; Donald Macintosh and Michael Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy* (Montreal: McGill Queen's Press, 1994).

see it as a high water mark of postwar interventionism, after which the Canadian government, beset by economic travails and shifts in the conventional wisdom about political economy, would never again risk expending political capital on a concern seemingly so peripheral to affairs of the state.

Chapter 2: Nation, Sport, and Policy: Key Concepts and Literature Review

While the history of the Canadian government's interventions into the Canadian Football League has not been studied before in any detail, there is a considerable literature on related topics and themes. In order to situate this study within that literature, this chapter reviews a variety of scholarship beginning with a consideration of the Canadian historiography of sport generally and football in particular. This chapter then explores nationalism theory, and then narrows in focus to examine Canadian nationalism and sport nationalism in Canada. Next the relationship between nationalism, sport and policy is examined, moving from the general to the specific. Cultural nationalism in Canada led to federal policy for the arts and letters more extensively than for sport, so scholarship on the former will be reviewed for context. Finally, scholarship in the area of sport policy, an underexplored branch of cultural policy that is directly relevant to this research, is detailed.

2.1 A Historiography of Canadian Sport

Sport's relationship to culture is ambiguous. The primary purposes of sport are exercise, competition, pleasure and health, but it has many ancillary cultural roles such as the contribution it can make to identities such as masculinity, class, and the representation of communities, be they towns, cities, provinces, or even nations.

Well into the late twentieth century, there was a reluctance to accept sport as worthy of academic attention. As sports journalist Jimmy Cannon argued, sport was

considered to be the equivalent of the toy department; an area not to be taken seriously.¹ This hampered the development of scholarly analysis of sport, including the development of sport history in Canada. The first works in the area were produced by sports journalists and according to Karen Hall,

typically echoed themes of linear progress towards achievement and victory, the conflicts of powerful opponents, the triumph of the maverick individual or leader, and the telling details of statistics [and] . . . the emergence of sport heroes. . . .

[T]hese narratives often [left] out the background stories of how many contribute to and struggle against an evolving sport culture.²

The first academic book produced on Canadian sport history was a comprehensive history of Canadian football by former CFL quarterback Frank Cosentino, published in 1969.³ Cosentino's work, a graduate thesis, was an account of football in Canada from its inception until the time of publication. His contribution was chronological sport history, without sociological analysis or critical theory. That same year, a history of sports and games in Canada was published by Nancy and Max Howell.⁴ As a first chronicle it was valuable, but it too lacked critical analysis. These books were followed by additional

¹ Howard Cosell, *I Never Played the Game* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1986), 5. Popular culture, like sport, was not deemed worthy of academic attention until the 1960s.

² Karen Hall, *Game Plan; A Social History of Sport in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2012), 11. Examples of writings include Henry Roxborough, *Great Days in Canadian Sport* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957); Henry Roxborough, *The Stanley Cup Story* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1964); Trent Frayne and Peter Gzowski, *Great Canadian Sports Stories: A Century of Competition*, (Toronto: Canadian Centennial Library, 1965); Henry Roxborough, *One Hundred not Out: The Story of Nineteenth-Century Canadian Sport* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966); Charles L. Coleman, *The Trail of the Stanley Cup* (Montreal: National Hockey League, 1966).

³ Frank Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years* (Toronto: Musson, 1969).

⁴ Nancy Howell and Maxwell L. Howell, *Sports and Games in Canadian Life 1700 to the Present* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969).

popular writings published by sports journalists and a number of general works on hockey.⁵ In their work, Wise and Fisher chided historians for overlooking the role games and sport played in the development of Canadian society.⁶ While works such as these did not examine sport from a critical perspective they promoted its recognition as an important form of popular culture in Canada.

Alan Metcalfe, a professor at the University of Windsor, played a key role in initiating the scholarly study of sport history in Canada. He established the first journal in the field in 1970, which greatly contributed to the level of scholarship in the area. In 1987 Metcalfe produced one of the first academic histories of sport in Canada, titled *Canada Learns to Play*. In his book he examined the rise of amateur organized sport among primarily middle-class, urban, Anglophone males prior to the First World War. He also criticized historians for not taking sport seriously.⁷ Despite its shortcomings, including overlooking the role of women and aboriginals, Metcalfe's book made an important contribution in suggesting that an analysis of sport history was important to understanding Canada.

⁵ Charles L. Coleman, *The Trail of the Stanley Cup: Volume Two* (Montreal: National Hockey League, 1969); Brian McFarlane, *The Stanley Cup* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971); Jack Batten, *Champions: Great Figures in Canadian Sport* (Toronto: New Press, 1971); Brian McFarlane, *The Story of the National Hockey League* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973); S. F. Wise and Douglas Fisher, *Canada's Sporting Heroes* (Don Mills: General Publishing Co. Ltd., 1974); Charles L. Coleman, *The Trail of the Stanley Cup: Volume Three* (Montreal: National Hockey League, 1976).

⁶ Wise reported that he was criticized by historian Arthur Lower for suggesting that sport was worthy of academic attention. See Richard Gruneau "Power and Play in Canadian Society," in *Power and Change in Canada*, ed. Richard J. Ossenberg (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), 155.

⁷ Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*, 9.

While Metcalfe's text was the first major scholarly contribution to the field, it was preceded by other works. It came out shortly after the publication of three other studies: an edited work by Max and Reet Howell, a sport history of the Scottish in Canada, and a brief look at women's sport history in Canada.⁸ These works contributed to the documentation of the history of sport in Canada and, as the first scholarly attempts to explore Canadian sport history, helped pave the way for the acceptance of sport as worthy of academic attention. Two more academic works were published shortly after Metcalfe's book: a volume of essays edited by Morris Mott and a strong collection of articles by a group of sport historians.⁹ The floodgates had opened, and many other works were produced, including scholarship from Bruce Kidd, Colin Howell, Ann Hall (with a more comprehensive history of women in sport in Canada), and Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley.¹⁰ Histories also began to appear of individual sports such as baseball, lacrosse, basketball, and hockey.¹¹

⁸ Maxwell L. Howell and Reet Howell, *History of Sport in Canada* (Champaign, Illinois: Stipes Publishing, 1981); Gerald Redmond, *The Sporting Scots of Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982); Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1986).

⁹ Morris Mott, ed., *Sports in Canada: Historical Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1989); Don Morrow, et al., *A Concise History of Sport in Canada* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁰ Kidd, *The Struggle*; Colin Howell, *Blood Sweat and Cheers*; M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002); Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*.

¹¹ William Humber, *Diamonds of the North: A Concise History of Baseball in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995); Donald M. Fisher, *Lacrosse: A History of the Game* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Brian I. Daly, *Canada's Other Game: Basketball from Naismith to Nash* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013); John Chi-Kit Wong, ed. *Coast to Coast: Hockey in Canada to the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

Numerous histories of hockey have been published as it is the sport most closely linked with Canadian identity.¹² However, by the time Cosentino's work on football was published, hockey at its highest level, the National Hockey League, was becoming more American. It expanded to more American locations in 1967, and eventually hired an American commissioner and moved the head office to New York. It was a triumph of capitalism over vernacular culture. Kidd and Macfarlane concluded that "[a]s with so many of our resources, the sellout of hockey was the inevitable consequence of our proximity to the United States, and our cheap faith in free enterprise."¹³ Today when the Stanley Cup finals are being played in California, Texas, or Florida, it becomes more difficult to view them as a Canadian event. Americanization has seriously undermined the mythical nation-building function of hockey in Canada.¹⁴

Themes most often encountered in sport histories of Canada include identity formation through sport, the conflict between amateurism and professionalism, and Americanization. Kidd and Metcalfe explored sport and class in their works.¹⁵ Sport historians have documented how early sport in Canada was primarily exclusive to upper class males of European background. (This was also initially the case for Canadian

¹² For example Roxborough, *The Stanley Cup Story*; Coleman, *The Trail of the Stanley Cup*; Volumes 1, 2 and 3; McFarlane, *The Stanley Cup*; McFarlane, *The Story of the National Hockey League*; Michael McKinley, *Putting a Roof on Winter: Hockey's Rise from Sport to Spectacle* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2002); Andrew C. Holman, ed., *Canada's Game: Hockey and Identity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009); Wong, *Coast to Coast*; Michael McKinley, *Hockey: A People's History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2009).

¹³ Bruce Kidd and John Macfarlane, *The Death of Hockey* (Toronto: New Press, 1972), 18-19.

¹⁴ Toby Miller, Geoffrey Lawrence, Jim McKay, and David Rowe, *Globalization and Sport: Playing the World* (London: Sage, 2001), 55.

¹⁵ Kidd, *The Struggle*; Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*.

football, but it changed rather quickly). Howell was more interested in how professional sport became a powerful form of popular culture in Canada and thus became implicated in nation-building.¹⁶ This research follows these themes insofar as it is concerned with the intertwined histories of sport and the Canadian nation, football's popularity, and its susceptibility to American influence.

2.2 A Historiography of Canadian Football

Canadian football, the focus of this study, evolved from the British game of rugby into a unique sporting form with rules specific to Canada. Canadian professional football, at its highest level represented by the Canadian Football League (CFL), is the only professional sporting league with all its teams based in Canada and with a Canadian quota that ensures about half of each team's players are Canadian. As a result the percentage of Canadians playing in the CFL is similar to that of those playing in the National Hockey League (NHL).¹⁷

Frank Cosentino argued that, with its British and American influences, "the

¹⁶ Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*.

¹⁷ The quota emerged as a residency requirement designed to maintain local representation on teams and attach these clubs to local communities. The quota enjoys the support of Canadians. When CFL officials moved to reduce the number of Canadians in the league in 2010, public resistance was swift and forceful enough to cause them to back down. See Terry Koshan, "League looks to cut Canucks," *Timmins Daily Press*, November 11, 2009, B1. A 2012 survey found the majority of Canadians felt that Canadian-based NHL teams should have a Canadian player quota similar to the quota in place in the CFL. See Randy Boswell, "Fill home team NHL benches with Canadian players: poll," *Ottawa Citizen*, September 25, 2010, F3. According to NHL.com, in the 2014-15 NHL season, 444 NHL players were Canadian comprising just over 50 percent of the league. According to CFL.ca, during the 2015 season 245 players in the CFL were Canadian making up 48 percent of the league.

development of football in Canada paralleled the growth of the Canadian Nation.”¹⁸ In a similar vein, Manning wrote that Canadian football “dramatically depicts recurrent themes of Canadian life: imported symbols, unique rules, east-west conflict, compromise between English tradition and American innovation, a shifting balance between smugness and inferiority, and the sense of an elusive identity and uncertain future.”¹⁹ Bruce Kidd’s short magazine article in 1969 was the first to raise the issue of Americanization in Canadian football. His piece was published just before the federal government decided to act to protect Canadian football.²⁰

In Canadian culture, football has usually taken a back seat to hockey and this is reflected in both the scholarly and popular literature. While many works have examined hockey and its role in Canadian identity formation, none have explored Canadian football and its role in constructing identity.²¹ Despite the popularity of the game in Canada, there

¹⁸ Frank Cosentino, “A History of Canadian Football, 1909-1968,” (MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 1969), 11.

¹⁹ Frank Manning, “Foreword,” in *Canadian Football: The View from the Helmet*, Robert Stebbins (London, Ont.: Centre for Social and Humanistic Studies, University of Western Ontario, 1987), vii.

²⁰ Bruce Kidd, “The Continentalization of Canadian Sport. Part II: Football,” *Canadian Dimension*, October/November, 1969, 48-50.

²¹ See Doug Beardsley, *Country on Ice* (Winlaw, B.C.: Polestar Press, 1987); Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities, and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993); Neil Earle, “Hockey as Canadian Popular Culture: Team Canada 1972, Television and the Canadian Identity,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1995); David Whitson, “Hockey and Canadian Identities: From Frozen Rivers to Revenue Streams,” in *A Passion for Identity: Canadian Studies for the 21st Century*, ed. David Taras and Beverly Rasporich, 4th ed. (Scarborough: Nelson Thomson Learning, 2001); Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity,” Daniel S. Mason, ““Get the Puck Outta Here!”: Media Transnationalism and Canadian Identity,” *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 26, no. 2 (May 2002); David Whitson and Richard Gruneau, ed., *Artificial Ice: Hockey, Culture, and Commerce* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2006); Jay Scherer, Gregory H. Duquette, and Daniel S. Mason, “The Cold War and the (Re)articulation of Canadian National Identity: The 1972 Canada-USSR Summit Series,” in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Holman, *Canada’s Game*.

has been very little scholarship published on Canadian football. Football researcher Michael Oriard argues that even in the United States, where both sport and football are powerful elements of popular culture, sport historians have had very little to say about football.²² The past fifty years have seen fewer than a dozen academic studies published on Canadian football, none of which examine its role in national identity formation or government involvement. Cosentino has provided the best examples of football scholarship, first in his MA thesis published as a book, and then with his second work, which continued with the history from 1968 to 1995.²³ In 2015 Cosentino had a third book published examining the history of the CFL from 1995 to 2014.²⁴ O'Brien provided a history of the league as it struggled during the 1980s and 1990s, including a section on American expansion, but provided little critical analysis.²⁵ There is some scholarship that explores the Americanization of Canadian football, most importantly Stebbin's chapter on Canadians' ambivalence about Canadian football, and Cantelon's MA thesis.²⁶ Kupfer

²² Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), XVII, XXIII.

²³ Cosentino, *A History*; Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years*; Frank Cosentino, *A Passing Game: A History of the CFL* (Winnipeg: Bain & Cox, 1995).

²⁴ Frank Cosentino, *Home Again: Canadian Football 1995-2014* (Toronto: Lulu Press, 2014).

²⁵ Steve O'Brien, *The Canadian Football League: The Phoenix of Professional Sports Leagues* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, 2005).

²⁶ Robert Stebbins, "Ambivalence at the Fifty-Five-Yard-Line: Transformation and Resistance in Canadian Football," in *The Beaver Bites Back? American Popular Culture in Canada*, ed. David H. Flaherty and Frank E. Manning (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Michael Cantelon, *The Canadian Football League: Radically Canadian?* (MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2001).

provides a historical account of the CFL's failed US expansion.²⁷ This rather short list demonstrates the dearth of scholarship on Canadian football.

2.3 Nationalism

In the foreword to one of the first academic books to explore Canadian nationalism, historian Frank Underhill proposed that nationalism had become the dominant twentieth-century religion.²⁸ The ideology of nationalism was examined critically by intellectuals as early as the eighteenth-century.²⁹ German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder's interpretation of the origins and nature of nations established ideological underpinnings for the growth and influence of nationalism in Europe over the next century. He recognized that feelings of national distinctiveness come not from race or ethnicity but from sharing "national fictions."³⁰

Much of the modern literature argues that nations are the product of nationalism.³¹ In other words, nationalism constructs the nation, or as Gellner puts it, nationalism "invents nations where they do not exist"³² Most scholars either see nationalism as a

²⁷ Charles Kupfer, "Crabs in the Grey Cup: Baltimore's Canadian Football Sojourn, 1994-95," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 24, no. 1 (2007).

²⁸ Frank Underhill, "Foreword," in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1966), xvi.

²⁹ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Steven T. Engel, "Rousseau and Imagined Communities," *The Review of Politics* 67, no.3 (Summer, 2005).

³⁰ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1966), 355.

³¹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 10.

³² Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 169.

modern development or as a phenomenon that took on a unique and potent form with the rise of modernity in the West. With the decline of feudal elites and the accompanying dogma that monarchs ruled by divine right, sovereignty was nominally relocated to the people. Nationalism offered a rationale that rising elites could use to influence unruly populaces and enlist their support. It explained and legitimized state sovereignty with the contention that it emanated from a people that had a collective coherence based on cultural similarities.³³ Culture, then, had profound political consequences. Nationalist intellectuals busied themselves constructing unique national histories and identities that would cohere their states' subjects.³⁴

The construction of nation is the focus of two landmark works on nationalism: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.³⁵ While Hobsbawm and Ranger tended to see the process as one of elites deceiving the masses in order to perpetuate their privilege, Anderson regarded it as a product of a natural human desire for community that required, under conditions of modernity, identification with larger collectivities that necessarily had to be imagined because they were too big to experience first-hand on an everyday basis. Under conditions of modernity, national culture was "invented" and disseminated by the mass media.

³³ Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*; Anthony Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates About Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Boston: Brandeis University Press, 2000), 27.

³⁴ Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*.

³⁵ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

To follow Anderson further, the imagining of community has very real consequences because it exists in individuals' memories as lived experiences of collective solidarity. The notion of a national community that is over time imagined into being in this way plays an important role in this study because it helps explain how Canadian football was linked with the Canadian nation and used to differentiate Canada from first Britain and then the United States.

Many nation-states have used sport to make claims of legitimacy, to pursue peaceful rivalries, or to promote national prestige and unity. This form of state-sponsored nationalism, often created by cultural policy, is referred to as official nationalism.³⁶ This is a nationalism constructed and exploited by the state to serve its purposes. Sport is useful in this capacity but, as Alan Bairner points out, sport also has the ability to undermine official nationalism. It can, for example, support sub-nation-state collective identities.³⁷ Sport is also a business, and while it can be profitable to exploit collective identities, sometimes business interests are at odds with official nationalism. Hayes concludes that this is one reason the study of commercial sport and nationalism is so intriguing.³⁸

The state is not the nation, nor the nation the state, though they often tend to get conflated. For Smith, the nation and the state have complementary interests. The state

³⁶ James Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Macmillan, 1991), 4.

³⁷ Alan Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 18.

³⁸ Sean Hayes, *Blue Jay Fever and other Sporting Formations of Canadian Nationalism* (MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1994), 28, 42, 123.

requires the popular support found through nationalism to legitimize its existence, and the nation requires the state to protect its unique culture and values.³⁹ Although nationalism is by no means the only or primary factor influencing state decisions, at times the state can act in the national interest. The conditions in which nationalism becomes a catalyst for government intervention are an important focus of this research.

Scholars agree that the media play an important role in creating an imagined community.⁴⁰ Anderson argued that print capitalism was fundamental to the creation of imagined feelings of commonality and community.⁴¹ The media have been integral to the creation of the view of Canadian football as an agent of national unity. Newspaper coverage of Canadian football, for example, provided a national shared experience. Canadians could imagine a kinship with other members of the nation as they all read about the same game even though they never met. Similarly, listening to a game on the radio or watching it on television provided simultaneous commonality.

The literature suggests that in Canada it is not only the media that play a key role in the creation of a national spirit, but also, as in most other countries, intellectual elites that work to confirm and build the nation. Since nationalism is socially constructed, it requires influential cultural producers to contribute to its construction. In his era, Herder emphasized how a national literature could be produced by the intelligentsia. Herder saw

³⁹ Anthony Smith, "Nationalism and Classical Social Theory," *The British Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (March, 1983).

⁴⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Larry Pratt and Martine Karvellas, "Nature and Nation: Herder, Myth, and Cultural Nationalism in Canada," *National History* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 63; Smith, *The Nation in History*.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 32.

their role to be to identify those characteristics that made a people unique and then articulate and disseminate a national identity accordingly. He felt that national identity was rooted in the folk expressions of a people's relationship with the land and that the intellectual's role was to identify and popularize the folk essence as the basis for national identity. An indigenous sport, particularly one like Canadian football that is associated with grassroots community, is an interesting variant of Herder's notion of folkways.⁴² Historians, journalists, professors, educators and civil servants are all members of an intelligentsia, broadly defined. In the case of Canada, many of them have been nationalists. This nationalist intelligentsia has been influential in maintaining in the public sphere discussions about the nation.

Theorists universally acknowledge the role of "cultural engineers" in constructing a nation.⁴³ As Anthony Smith asserts, "nationalists invent and imagine the nation by representing it to the majority through a variety of cultural media and social rituals."⁴⁴ Intellectuals in Canada, including politicians and journalists, played an important role in garnering public support for Canadian football and the Grey Cup, shaping public opinion and influencing public policy.

Traditionally, intellectual elites look to construct nationalism through high culture. In Canada this approach has been evident in the creation of the CBC, the Massey Commission, and later the formation of the Canada Council and its support for the arts.

⁴² Pratt and Karvellas, "Nature and Nation," 61.

⁴³ Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*; Smith, *The Nation in History*, 52.

⁴⁴ Smith, *The Nation in History*, 52-53.

This strain of cultural nationalism conflated Canadianization and edification. Sport offered a more direct connection to a broader cross-section of society. As it appeals to and arguably arises from the masses, sport can be seen as an expression of the innate character of the people. If it has mass appeal, it can transcend divisions of class, language, region, race and ethnicity.⁴⁵ In this way sport can be viewed as genuine popular culture. To the extent that it is popular, sport represents the type of typical pastime of the people in which national character might be found.

Many scholars agree that history, or rather, a particular shared understanding of history, is an important contributor to national identity. Homi Bhabha suggests that to legitimize their existence, nations have to claim historical roots and continuity. Bhabha calls this “narrating the nation.”⁴⁶ Edward Said proposes that stories and narratives are a “method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history.” Said eloquently concludes that “Nations are narrations.”⁴⁷ By the 1960s, when the government first acted to protect Canadian football, football and nation had been associated with one another for over a century in Canada. The association provided a rich layer of myths, stories and narratives by which to imagine the Canadian nation.

⁴⁵ Technologies such as the railway, telegraph, and forms of media play an important role in this process and will be examined in the next chapter.

⁴⁶ Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990). Stuart Hall agrees with Bhabha’s approach. See Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity,” in *Modernity and its Futures*, ed. Tony McGrew, Stuart Hall, and David Held (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 293.

⁴⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1993), xiii.

Another idea that arises in the literature is that a national identity must be carved out of difference.⁴⁸ A consciousness of national identity is shaped by a collective awareness that those people who constitute the nation are essentially different from those in other nations.⁴⁹ Identity is formed by eliminating or overlooking what is shared with a foreign “other.”⁵⁰ Sport can easily help differentiate one nation from another as “[s]port like no other cultural formation, mobilizes and heightens feelings of identification and collective belonging.”⁵¹ In his discussion of the relationship of sport and nationalism, Alan Bairner suggests that the two combined provide resistance to the pressures of globalization in contemporary times.⁵²

Canadian football developed with different rules than English rugby or American football.⁵³ The characteristics that mean the most in defining Canadian identity are those that distinguish Canada from the United States. Canadian football, imagined as a way to

⁴⁸ Peter Karl Kresl, “Quebec’s Culture Policy: Will Increased Autonomy Matter?” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1996); Steven Jackson, “Gretzky Nation; Canada, Crisis, and Americanization,” in *Sports Stars, The Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, ed. David Andrews and Steven Jackson (London: Routledge, 2001), 168.

⁴⁹ Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, *Sport and National Identity in the Post-war World* (London: Routledge, 2004), 12, 46. This history may be invented to maintain distinctiveness and unity, what Immanuel Wallerstein calls the “reinvention of difference.” See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 166-167, quoted in Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity,” 295.

⁵⁰ Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 157.

⁵¹ Sean Hayes, “America’s National Pastime and Canadian Nationalism,” in *Sport and Memory in North America*, ed. Steven Wieting, (London: Routledge, 2001), 164.

⁵² Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization*.

⁵³ Differences include but are not limited to the number of players on the field and on each team, the size of the field, the way the game is timed, import restrictions for players, the number of tries to make a certain number of yards to retain ball possession, the movement of players prior to a play, the kicking game and one minor difference in scoring. These differences also result in different strategies being employed.

differentiate Canadians from Americans, became a tangible cultural practice used to perpetuate Canadianness.

2.4 Canadian Nationalism

Historian R.C. Brown once suggested that debating Canadian nationalism “has been the pre-eminent preoccupation of politicians, journalists, scholars and plain ordinary citizens. . . Many nations have manifested their nationalism through great public acts,” he observed, adding wryly, “Canada has asserted its nationalism by looking for it.”⁵⁴

The search is understandable under the circumstances. A common culture, language, ethnicity, religion, or cohesive national history are often used to define a nation, but Canada possesses none of these. Canada is a settler country with a colonial heritage and a culturally diverse populace continuously refreshed by new immigrants. It has a small population sharing a large territory with strong traditional regions, and therefore has had to work hard to manufacture a sense of national identity. In addition, Canada achieved political independence much later than most other industrialized nations and came into existence as a result of political expediency rather than any organic growth, coup of statesmanship, or traumatic event.

As a result Canada has perhaps relied on “imagining” itself more than most nations. Under these circumstances it is a testament to the power of nationalist ideology that Canadian intellectuals were able to construct a national identity at all. Key in this process has been the manufacturing of distinctive myths and symbols that are effective in evoking

⁵⁴ Robert Craig Brown, “The Nationalism of the National Policy,” in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 155.

strong emotional responses. Canadian football and the Grey Cup fulfill these roles as important elements in the nation building process.

In the decades immediately preceding the government's interventions into Canadian football, the Laurentian Thesis was a widely accepted explanation of Canada's historical development. Inspired by Harold Innis' assertion that the "Dominion emerged not in spite of geography but because of it," the thesis argued that Canada developed naturally along east-west geographical lines.⁵⁵ Donald Creighton elaborated on this insight to create a meta-narrative of Canadian economic and political development. What began with the water transportation route through the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes continued with later transportation technologies such as the railway, highways and airlines and communications systems such as the telegraph, radio, and television, allowing Canada to continually overcome the challenge of space. This east-west orientation separated Canada from the United States, providing a reason for its separate existence.⁵⁶ Moreover, the fact that state intervention was required to create the east-west transportation and communications infrastructure has made such intervention, in and of itself, an identity marker that distinguishes Canada from the United States.

The Laurentian thesis has been criticized for promoting an economic interpretation of Canada in which eastern interests exploit western hinterlands, thus exacerbating

⁵⁵ The thesis is based on ideas from H.A. Innis in *The Fur Trade of Canada*. This quote comes from Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade of Canada*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 393.

⁵⁶ Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: an Essay on History, Communication, and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 136.

regional disparity and grievances.⁵⁷ It overlooks the history of the west and presents a homogenous Canadian experience. However, the Laurentian Thesis was replicated in the east-west structure of the CFL, as well as the Grey Cup, which pits east vs. west. This organizational structure reified the nation, endearing the league to Canadians as one reflected the other.

Michael Billig defines banal nationalism as the everyday, taken-for-granted expressions of nationalism that fly below the radar of conscious thought. The nation is reinforced by numerous ordinary references that implicitly naturalize its existence.⁵⁸ In this way nationalism is embedded into the daily routine of life. Banal nationalism operates mindlessly rather than mindfully and is so common people do not notice it.

Banal nationalism is a very powerful form of nationalism in Canada.⁵⁹ Canadians are reminded of their Canadianness when passing mail boxes, viewing maps, or seeing the maple leaf on commercial signs. As Canadian football evolved, it became entangled with numerous forms of banal nationalism. The national anthem is played prior to games, the Canadian flag is featured on player helmets, and the game is featured on stamps, coins, and even passports. The season starts on Canada Day, the league logo features the Maple Leaf, and Mounties are prominently featured at the Grey Cup. Through these practices the collective comes to see Canadian football as a signifier of the nation.

⁵⁷ Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 241-2.

⁵⁸ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.

⁵⁹ Govind Rao, "The National Question in Canadian Development: Permeable Nationalism and the Ideological Basis for Incorporation into Empire," *Studies in Political Economy* 85 (Spring 2010), 152.

Another venerable theme in the literature on Canadian identity is the Canadian inferiority complex.⁶⁰ Canada's political economy results in a dependency that is cultural as well as economic. An economy based on natural resources tends to be dependent on better developed economies interested in using those resources. A country with few natural or cultural barriers to commerce and communication with a larger more powerful neighbour is vulnerable to cultural dependence.⁶¹ Canada has been subservient to another world power throughout its history, and this has fostered an inferiority complex. Frantz Fanon submits that a colonized society suffers from an inferiority complex where the cultural practices of the mother country are treated seriously and become viewed as the most valued and legitimate.⁶²

Lappage suggests that American domination of Canadian sport contributed to the formation of the Canadian inferiority complex.⁶³ This mentality influenced the views that some Canadians had towards Canadian football when they began to be offered opportunities to consume American football on television. Stebbins, Harrison, and McTeer and colleagues all agree that the Canadian inferiority complex resulted in a

⁶⁰ See for example Philip Resnick, *The Land of Cain: Class and Nationalism in English Canada 1945-1975* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1977), 90; Mary Vipond, "The Nationalist Network: English Canada's Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 5 (Spring 1980), 43-4; William Kymlicka, "Being Canadian," *Government and Opposition* 38, no. 3 (July 2003), 365-6.

⁶¹ Smith suggests that colonialism is "a spirit that gratefully accepts a place of subordination" and "looks elsewhere for its standards of excellence." See A.J.M. Smith, "Canadian Historical Association 1943-1944, Report of Annual Meeting," 74, quoted in Frank Watt, "Nationalism in Canadian Literature" in Peter Russell, *Nationalism in Canada*, 238.

⁶² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

⁶³ Ronald Lappage, *Sport in Canadian Society, 1921-1939* (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1974).

decline of interest in the CFL.⁶⁴ The arrival of, first, the Montreal Expos Major League Baseball (MLB) team, and then, the Toronto Blue Jays, playing against teams from New York and Boston or Los Angeles, resulted in reduced support for the local CFL football team.⁶⁵ Baseball provided an opportunity for the cities of Montreal or Toronto and sports fans to be seen as “major league.” As one writer argued, “when Toronto plays New York . . . it confirms a perception of the city as world class,” but when Toronto plays Hamilton or Regina “it feeds our worst fears about Canadian provincialism and mediocrity.”⁶⁶ Many scholars suggest that rather than lament the state of the CFL, its mere existence in the shadow of the NFL should be celebrated.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Stebbins, “Ambivalence”; Trevor Harrison, “The Case for Public Support of the CFL,” *Policy Options* 18, no. 3 (1997); William McTeer, Phil White, and Augie Fleras. “The Americanization of Canadian Professional Football: A Case of Cultural Disintegration?” Unpublished manuscript (1991).

⁶⁵ The Toronto Argonaut football team averaged 45,395 spectators a game during the Toronto Blue Jays’ first season. A decade later average attendance per game was below 27,000 and 15 years after the arrival of major league baseball, attendance had dropped to less than 20,000 per game. After the Expos arrived, attendance for the Alouettes declined three of the next four years until the team moved to the Olympic Stadium. Eleven years after the Expos completed their first season, the Alouettes folded. A new team was formed but lasted just five seasons.

⁶⁶ Dick Snider, “Hut one, hut two,” *EnRoute*, November 1989, 54.

⁶⁷ Reginald Bibby, “CFL still up after all the putdowns,” *Globe and Mail*, October 5, 1992, A18; Stebbins, *Ambivalence*, 138; Hayes, *Blue Jay Fever*, 137. This inferiority complex is surprising when one considers that per capita attendance is higher in the CFL than in the NFL, and the CFL draws larger crowds on average than pro soccer in France, Italy, Mexico or Brazil (although soccer teams play more games). In addition, affluence is often a measure of success, but according to Forbes.com and CFL.ca, a greater percentage of CFL teams are profitable than NHL teams. In 2015 more than one-quarter of NHL franchises lost money while eight of the nine CFL teams were profitable. See Dan Ralph, “TSN and CFL agree on deal worth \$40-million a year,” *Globe and Mail*, March 21, 2013, S3; Cam Cole, “TV deal keeps CFL afloat,” *National Post*, November 18, 2015, B1; Forbes.com 2015 NHL Valuations.

2.5 Sport and Nationalism

Sport and nationalism are powerfully emotive forces in the modern world. Sport often acts as a vehicle for the expression of nationalist sentiment.⁶⁸ Sport plays an important role in creating feelings of collective belonging and provides a means by which to celebrate national identities. Cultural practices commonly contribute to national identity. Therefore it should not be surprising that sport has been used in nation-building around the world.

Sport is positioned primarily as a form of popular culture which attracts attention from a large part of the populace. As such, for thousands of years “sport has occupied a unique place in the ritual expression of the culture and self-image of societies.”⁶⁹ Today the most popular form of nationalist behaviour in many countries is found in sport.⁷⁰ Jarvie suggests that sport “often provides a uniquely effective medium for inculcating national feelings; it provides a form of symbolic action which states the case for the nation itself.”⁷¹ Sports have often strengthened or even accelerated the development of national communities.⁷²

⁶⁸ Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism*, xi.

⁶⁹ Lynton Guest, “A Game of Politics and Passion,” *Geographical Magazine* 62, no. 8 (August, 1990), 42.

⁷⁰ Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism*, 21.

⁷¹ Grant Jarvie, “Sport, Nationalism, and Cultural Identity,” in *The Changing Politics of Sport*, ed. Lincoln Allison (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1993), 74.

⁷² Bruce Kidd, “Sport, Dependency and the Canadian State,” in *Sport, Culture, and the Modern State*, ed. Hart Cantelon and Richard Gruneau (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1982), 284.

Sport seems more real than many other cultural expressions because it is often consumed live, relatively uninterrupted, with dramatic tension generated by the uncertain outcome of the contest. Historian Eric Hobsbawm's concept of the importance of invented traditions is particularly relevant in relation to sports, where team identities, names, and regalia are created.⁷³ Macintosh and his colleagues believe that where differing regional loyalties and affiliations threaten to pull the country apart, institutions and concepts that have appeal across these disparate factions are critical to the nation's continued existence. . . Endeavours such as sport, which have the potential to transcend language, cultural, and geographic differences, can serve to tie regional loyalties in a common sense of nationhood.⁷⁴

One of the ways to perform national identity is to cheer for a national team or to participate in a national sport. Sporting affiliations can be among the most public statements that people make about their identities. They can also generate national pride and prestige associated with success in international competition.⁷⁵ International sporting competitions (such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup of Soccer), not national sporting competitions, are the most obvious examples of sport representing the nation. A distinct national sport like Canadian football cannot achieve this status as it has no

⁷³ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁷⁴ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 173.

⁷⁵ See Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.

international forum in which to compete.⁷⁶ Not being able to play Canadian football internationally takes away from some of its nation-building properties, but does nothing to weaken the importance of the game to the definition of Canadianness. The value of Canadian football is in the national identity and unity to which it can contribute.

2.6 A National Sport

In a wide-ranging study of cultural policy in postwar Canada, Ryan Edwardson argued that Canada provides a fascinating case study of how nationhood has been defined and pursued through culture.⁷⁷ However, his research intentionally left out sport to concentrate on other forms of popular culture. In contrast, sport sociologist John Hargreaves claimed that “[p]robably more than any other component of national culture, sports symbolize a national way of life.”⁷⁸ Sport, in particular a national sport, can be particularly effective in nation-building. It provides emotionally charged opportunities for citizens to express their local identity within the nation and in turn identify with the nation.⁷⁹ Arguably, sport has played a more important role than the arts in constructing community, forming commonality, and creating identity among the masses in Canada.

⁷⁶ There is a World Championship of American football played with American rules featuring only a handful of countries and not viewed as a serious competition. Canada finished second to the United States in 2011. The 2015 championship was moved from Sweden due to lack of interest.

⁷⁷ Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 26.

⁷⁸ John Hargreaves, *Sport, Power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sports in Britain* (London: Polity Press, 1987), 220.

⁷⁹ Barry Houlihan, “Sport, National Identity and Public Policy,” *Nations and Nationalism* 3, no. 1 (1997), 116.

Sport is a form of mass culture with widespread exposure and acceptance, making it a more powerful contributor to nation building than other cultural forms. Sport nourishes a sense of community and is often deployed deliberately to reinforce national unity.

There are at least four different patterns of sport nationalism. As has been mentioned, the most obvious example is the representation of a nation in elite international sporting competition such as the Olympic Games or World Cup of Soccer. Indeed, there are few arenas where national expression is more intense than in this type of event. These competitions are a tangible way to demonstrate the nation's existence. Hobsbawm famously proposed that the "imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people."⁸⁰ Nationalism seeks national unity through identity, but it also seeks gratification of national pride through international recognition. Even successfully hosting a major international sporting competition such as the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games can create feelings of unity and identity.

A second form of sporting nationalism can be seen when an athlete or a team advances to an elite form of sport in another country. Having a Swedish hockey player excel in the NHL or a Chinese basketball player succeed in the National Basketball Association results in international status for the country that claims to have successfully produced the athlete. This represents somewhat of a contradiction as the athlete has left his or her country and succeeded elsewhere, nevertheless it still results in national pride and raised international status as the country takes credit for the athlete's success. In a similar way, the success of a team in an international league that is seen to represent the

⁸⁰ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 143.

nation against another team representing another nation can make valuable contributions to nation building, particularly with a victory over a dominant nation. Even if the team is not logically associated with the nation this can still be powerful. The World Series victories of baseball's Toronto Blue Jays, a team made up of non-Canadians, demonstrated, in the minds of many, the superiority of a colony in the national pastime associated with the colonizer.⁸¹

A national sport, a set of physical practices regarded as a central feature of the national identity, represents a third way that sport contributes to nation-building. Hobsbawm suggested that the use of sport as a national signifier was "one of the most significant of the new social practices" of the late nineteenth century and provided a means of national identification through the "choice or invention of nationally specific sports."⁸² Cricket has been identified with Britain just as the Turnen gymnastic movement was identified with the German nation and baseball became synonymous with the United States. Bairner believes that participating in indigenous sport is the ultimate expression of sporting nationalism. Hockey is played in many parts of the world but is still closely associated with Canada, which consistently enjoys success in international hockey competitions. Sport becomes an even more powerful national element when a national sport is contested internationally as both national unity and international status can be gratified simultaneously. This is what happens when Canadian teams win the hockey gold medal at the Olympic Games.

⁸¹ See Hayes, *Blue Jay Fever*.

⁸² Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 143, 74; Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 298, 300.

A final example of the contribution sport can make to the nation-building process is a national league that can help reify the nation as a natural construct. Many countries have sporting leagues featuring teams in competitions structured on a national basis. Rivalries between clubs and the regions they represent might be viewed as divisions within the nation, yet the national structure of the league and its championship are taken for granted. Football in America, rugby in New Zealand, soccer in many parts of the world, cricket in India and football in Canada are all examples in which the nation provides the context within which competition is framed. While there are differences in each case, all of these forms result in an Andersonian national communion through the mediated consumption of sport.

Sport has often been used to resist colonial status. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was formed in Ireland in 1884 in part to resist British rule. It was instrumental in differentiating the Irish from the English, in stimulating cultural and political resistance to Britain, and in forging commonality amongst the populace by promoting indigenous Irish cultural sporting forms such as hurley and Gaelic Football. The GAA promoted indigenous national sports to create a distinct Irish national identity while working to prevent the spread of foreign English sports. A similar process of promoting traditional national games was underway in Russia and Norway. Belgians wanted to exclude British sports from their schools in an effort to develop a unique sporting identity.⁸³

⁸³ On the GAA see Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism*, 69-90. For Russia, Norway and Belgium see John D. Windhausen and Irina V. Tsypkina, "National Identity and the Emergence of the Sports Movement in Imperial Russia," in *Tribal Identities: Nationalism, Europe, Sport*, ed. J.A. Mangan, (London: Frank Cass, 2008); Matti Goksoyr, "Phases and Functions of Nationalism: Norway's Utilization of International Sport in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Tribal Identities: Nationalism, Europe, Sport*, ed. J.A. Mangan, (London: Frank Cass, 2008); Jan Tolleneer, "The Dual Meaning of 'Fatherland' and Catholic

While sport can help build national identity, it may also work against it. Though professional sports attract much attention in North America, capital accumulation is more important to their operation than supporting the nation. National boundaries are subordinated in continentally organized sport. Canada needed to differentiate itself from the United States, but commercial sport in the form of hockey, baseball, and basketball evolved on a continentalist model with both athletes and teams flowing across the border and no rule differences between the games played in the two countries.

Continentalism is a concept that is important in this research. The term refers to the pressure for closer economic, political, military and cultural ties between Canada and the United States.⁸⁴ Historically the forces of nationalism have pushed for autonomy against these forces of continentalism. Professional team sports in Canada (including soccer, lacrosse, basketball, baseball, and hockey) tend to be continental while most individual professional sports (including track and field, golf, tennis, cycling, figure skating, and swimming) are international. Football is the only professional sport in North American that features different rules and is organized along national lines.

The CFL may actually benefit from its unique position in continental North America. Some Canadians resent the NHL's American expansion in pursuit of major league status, and the CFL may gain from its appearance as the underdog struggling to

Gymnasts in Belgium: 1882-1914," in *Tribal Identities: Nationalism, Europe, Sport*, ed. J.A. Mangan, (London: Frank Cass, 2008).

⁸⁴ The use of continentalism in this research is consistent with Bruce Kidd, "The Continentalization of Canadian Sport," Allan Smith, *Canadian Culture, the Canadian State and the New Continentalism* (Orono, ME: Canadian-American Center, University of Maine Canadian-American Center, University of Maine Press, 1990); and Allan Smith, *Canada: An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994).

survive against the behemoth American NFL.⁸⁵ The United States is often equated with an overhyped mass-mediated modernity. By comparison the CFL represents a grassroots authenticity that provides an alternative way of being North American.⁸⁶ In contrast to the over-promoted NFL, the CFL is associated with local communities, community-ownership, and a carefully guarded tradition.⁸⁷

2.7 Sport and Nationalism in Canada

Canada began developing national sports before it was an autonomous nation.⁸⁸ Recreational activities, including sport, became important in the mid-nineteenth century. Sports could provide a popular diversion from the harsh realities of life for the industrial working class, a social outing for isolated farmers, and entertainment to fill time designated for leisure. Indigenous games could be used to help immigrants from differing cultural backgrounds adjust to a new way of life.⁸⁹ Participating in local cultural forms helped people belong to that new culture. Sport helped make citizens feel attached to a place, a people and a nation. At this time commercial interests had less influence on sport

⁸⁵ Kidd and Macfarlane, *The Death of Hockey*; Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism*, 134; Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 99-100; Steven J. Jackson, "Gretzky, Crisis, and Canadian Identity, in 1988: Rearticulating the Americanization of Culture Debate," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 11, (1994), 435. This attitude was particularly evident when Canadian hockey superstar Wayne Gretzky was traded from Edmonton to Los Angeles, and later again when pro NHL hockey teams in Quebec and Winnipeg moved to US markets.

⁸⁶ Houlihan raises the point about the attractive underdog as does Brunt. See Houlihan, "Sport, National Identity," 127; Brunt, "The Changing Face of Sport," 87.

⁸⁷ Until 1974, six of the nine CFL teams were community-owned. In 2016 one-third of the teams, including the two most profitable teams, were community-owned.

⁸⁸ Kidd, "Sport, Dependency," 286; Houlihan, "Sport, National Identity," 34.

⁸⁹ In Canada, sport has long been used to assimilate immigrants. See Hall, *Game Plan*, 39-40.

then they would in the twentieth century. Sport was more participatory, more directly related to people's lives, and more directly controlled by them.⁹⁰

The quest for a distinctive Canadian identity involved differentiating Canadians from the British or the Americans. Several authors express how indigenous sports in early Canada could provide the experience required to effect the transformation from colonist to Canadian.⁹¹ Sport was often used for assimilating new immigrants. Robidoux and Cooper suggest that the residents of British North America were attracted to indigenous physical activities that would help incorporate them into community.⁹² Lacrosse, hockey, Canadian football and other outdoor activities such as snowshoeing and tobogganing were used to help construct the nation.⁹³ Difference was exhibited not just in the type of sport but also in the way the games were played. For example, Robidoux argues that the violence evident in lacrosse or hockey was used to counter English gentility, serving to differentiate Canada from imperial Britain.⁹⁴

After Confederation Canadians rejected British sport models in their quest for a distinct national identity. Imported sports became less popular than indigenous games. Cricket was derided as it “does not bloom in Canada; the game is not indigenous to the

⁹⁰ See Hayes, *Blue Jay Fever*, Chapter One.

⁹¹ See for example Gillian Poulter, *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture, and Identity in Montreal: 1840–1885* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 269.

⁹² Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity”; David Cooper, “Canadians Declare It Isn’t Cricket: A Century of Rejection of the Imperial Game,” *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1999).

⁹³ Poulter, *Becoming Native*.

⁹⁴ Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity,” 216.

Canadian soil.”⁹⁵ Similarly baseball was dismissed as it was “an imported game, . . . a sand-lot sport usually played by undesirables!”⁹⁶ Activities such as lacrosse, hockey and football were favoured by the sporting community as indigenous activities. Once a Canadian sporting culture had been established, the popularity of imported sports started to decline.⁹⁷ Shea asserts that one reason the French were not as involved in organizing sports in early Canada is because they did not feel the same compulsion to differentiate themselves from Natives, Americans or Britons.⁹⁸ Until well into the twentieth century the antidote to American influence in a particular sector of arts or entertainment was to import British products as a counterbalance. Certainly there were devotees of the British Empire in Canada who were keen to pursue British sport, and as a result sports like soccer, rowing, and rugby were not uncommon. However, indigenous sport was used by early Canadians to develop a unique and autonomous identity distinct from both American and British models.

2.8 Cultural Policy

Knowledge of Canadian cultural policy is vital to understanding the government’s unprecedented intervention into Canadian professional football. Many academics argue

⁹⁵ Roxborough, *One Hundred--not Out*, 57.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 113. There certainly is a class element present in these writings. This is an example of the upper-class influencing the pursuit of indigenous sports.

⁹⁷ William Hallett, *A History of Federal Government Involvement in the Development of Sport in Canada: 1945-1979*, (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1981), 59; Hall, *Game Plan*, 178.

⁹⁸ Anna Shea, *Cultural Mechanisms of Empire: The “Lacrosse Emigration Tour” of 1883* (MA Thesis, McGill University, 2004).

that markets for cultural products do not conform to general economic rules that apply to other consumer products.⁹⁹ They have social value external to their monetary value which makes them too important to leave to the vagaries of market forces. Left to the free market, Canadian cultural producers are often at a disadvantage in relation to American competitors who enjoy greater economies of scale. Therefore the government is justified in intervening to provide support for cultural products.¹⁰⁰ The literature suggests that there are many reasons why the government would introduce a cultural policy. These include associated economic benefits, regional interest, trade and investment, or perceived social benefits such as identity, pride and unity.¹⁰¹

Bernard Ostry was among the first authors to examine Canadian cultural policy. He concluded that the government has a clear responsibility to support Canadian culture to create a sense of nationhood, something that was lacking in Canada.¹⁰² Ostry's book was written at a time when the Canadian government was very involved in cultural support. His detailed examination cited the end of the First World War as a starting point for increased government involvement.¹⁰³ Early examples of government cultural

⁹⁹ Foote, *Federal Cultural Policy in Canada*; Peter Grant and Chris Wood, *Blockbusters and Trade Wars: Popular Culture in a Globalized World* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2004). Vipond suggests that cultural industries transmit information and foster identity and unity. See Mary Vipond, *Mass Media in Canada*, 4th ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ Grant and Wood, *Blockbusters and Trade Wars*, 5.

¹⁰¹ Keith Acheson, and Christopher Maule, *Much Ado About Culture: North American Trade Disputes* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001); Foote, *Federal Cultural Policy*; Grant and Wood, *Blockbusters and Trade Wars*.

¹⁰² Ostry, *The Cultural Connection*, 4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 41.

intervention in Canada include a Royal Commission on radio, tariff protection in the magazine industry, and the formation of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau.

Maria Tippet's book on cultural policy from Confederation to the Second World War detailed this early government patronage but also outlined later interventions including the formation of the CBC in 1936 and the National Film Board in 1939, summing them up as "overtly patriotic exercises."¹⁰⁴ Following Tippet's work was Litt's detailed look at the Massey Commission, formed after the Second World War.¹⁰⁵ The Massey Commission, resulted in intensified government support for Canadian culture, albeit an elitist form of culture, for the most part, as opposed to the popular culture of the masses. This increase in government support for culture coincided with the growth in nationalism in post-war Canada.

The conclusion of the Massey Commission was that American cultural imperialism was a threat to Canadian nationhood. American cultural domination has been one of the Canadian federal government's preoccupations and has been used to justify government intervention.¹⁰⁶ As a result of the Massey Commission the federal government established

¹⁰⁴ Tippet, *Making Culture*, 77.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Litt, *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3.

¹⁰⁶ Ostry, *The Cultural Connection*; John Herd Thompson, "Canada's Quest for 'Cultural Sovereignty': Protection, Promotion, and Popular Culture," in *Seeing Ourselves: Media, Power, and Policy in Canada*, ed. Helen Holmes and David Taras (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jonanovich Canada, 1992); Stephen Azzi, and Tamara Feick. "Coping with the Cultural Colossus: Canada and the International Instrument on Cultural Diversity," in *Canada Among Nations 2003: Coping with the American Colossus*, ed. David Carment, Fen Osten Hampson, and Norman Hillmer (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003); Grant and Wood, *Blockbusters and Trade Wars*.

the Canada Council, responsible for funding the humanities, arts and social sciences, in 1957. In the 1960s state-mandated Canadian content quotas were implemented to help facilitate access to Canadian content on television. Over the next decade Canadian cultural policy expanded to include programs, regulations and subsidies to protect and stimulate a wide variety of Canadian cultural production.

In his book *Canadian Content*, Edwardson lays out a three-phase chronological framework for postwar cultural policy.¹⁰⁷ The first period, Masseyism, as Edwardson refers to it, was characterized by an Anglophilic nationalism focused on high culture. The new nationalism that emerged next was comparatively populist and thus more concerned with cultural industries associated with the mass media. The third and final period emphasized “cultural industrialism” under the Trudeau government. This schema provides a provisional framework for understanding the evolution of sport policy. Masseyism featured scant interest in sport. The new nationalism that developed in 1960s Canada provided more fertile conditions for government intervention in sport and leisure activities. “Cultural industrialism” featured government intervention in a wide-range of areas including, eventually, Canadian football. American influence hampered the ability of Canadians to use culture to help define identity, just as it did in sport. While public policy in the realm of culture has been subject to extensive analysis, its application to sport, especially professional sport, has been overlooked, despite the fact that it is an increasingly important area of policy.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Edwardson, *Canadian Content*.

¹⁰⁸ Barry Houlihan, “Public Sector Sport Policy: Developing a Framework for Analysis,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 40, no. 2 (June 2005), 163.

A debate arose in the 1990s around the question of whether a distinct national culture and identity was a prerequisite to being an independent nation. Some scholars suggested that consuming foreign culture does not harm the development of an indigenous culture.¹⁰⁹ For example, Rutherford argued that American mass culture did not pose a threat to Canadian identity because it was deconstructed through a Canadian lens.¹¹⁰ Others suggested that consumers are not passive receptacles and contend that the products of mass culture are decoded differently depending on recipients' biases.¹¹¹ This idea of "reversible resistance" proposes that "Canadians import and eagerly consume American cultural products but reconstitute and recontextualize them in ways representative of what consciously distinguishes Canada from the US."¹¹² Even the extent to which the existence of an independent state requires a national culture is open to debate. Collins, for example, suggests that a nation does not require a unique culture. He points to Canada as an example, arguing that English-Canada's weak sense of itself acts as an advantage in being flexible enough to accommodate immigration and avoid some of

¹⁰⁹ Richard Collins, *Culture, Communication and National Identity: The Case of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Paul Rutherford, "Made in America: The Problem of Mass Culture in Canada," in *The Beaver Bites Back? American Popular Culture in Canada*, ed. David Flaherty and Frank Manning (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Lee Becker, "Conflicting Goals, Confused Elites, Active Audiences: Some thoughts on Canadian Media Policy," in *Media Policy, National Identity and Citizenry in Changing Democratic Societies*, ed. Joel Smith (Durham, N.C.: Canadian Studies Centre, Duke University Press, 1998).

¹¹⁰ Rutherford, "Made in America."

¹¹¹ Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing, 'The Popular,'" in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1989).

¹¹² Frank Manning, "Reversible Resistance," 8.

the problems associated with overt nationalism.¹¹³ There certainly is ample evidence to support the idea that maintaining a national culture is a challenge, particularly in a country like Canada, and that the nation perhaps does not suffer from this absence. Therefore, one could make the argument that the federal government was wrong in trying to protect Canadian football from American leagues.

Other scholarship challenges this idea, suggesting that foreign consumption at the expense of domestic cultural consumption damages national consciousness and national identity, and may compromise sovereignty.¹¹⁴ These authors suggest that culture is at the very heart of sovereignty and that there “can be no political sovereignty without cultural sovereignty.”¹¹⁵ They feel that access to indigenous cultural products can help citizens develop a national identity.¹¹⁶ The belief that cultural sovereignty and political sovereignty are mutually dependent is the core assumption on which Canadian cultural policy is based. This belief is usually accompanied by the idea that American popular culture is “a Trojan horse enabling foreign concerns and priorities to infiltrate [the] minds and beings [of Canadians].”¹¹⁷ This approach posits that Canadians’ enthusiastic consumption of American culture compromises the creation of a cohesive national

¹¹³ Collins, *Culture, Communication*, 110.

¹¹⁴ John Meisel, “Escaping Extinction: Cultural Defense of an Undefended Border,” in *Southern Exposure: Canadian Perspectives on the United State*, ed. David Flaherty and William R. McKercher (Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1986); Aniko Bodroghkozy, “As Canadian as Possible . . . Anglo-Canadian Popular Television and the American other,” in *Hop on Pop: The Pleasures and Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson, and Jane Shattuc (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Vipond, *Mass Media*.

¹¹⁵ Collins, *Culture, Communication*, 13.

¹¹⁶ Acheson and Maule, *Much Ado*, 11.

¹¹⁷ Meisel, “Escaping Extinction,” 290.

identity.¹¹⁸ Smith concludes that Canada has struggled to maintain an indigenous culture because of the United States and he uses Canada as the case-study when examining an independent country that has become culturally dependent.¹¹⁹ The term “Canadianization” has even been used to describe this situation.¹²⁰ In Canada, much of the scholarship concludes that the state is the only vehicle capable of organizing resistance to these continental influences.¹²¹

As a result, one scholar has noted, Canadians have developed an expertise in crafting cultural policy.¹²² Michael Dorland asserts that the history of protecting the cultural distinctiveness of Canada has led directly to the state becoming the central agent of cultural life.¹²³ “Statism” is purported to be a central Canadian cultural trait which

¹¹⁸ Stephen Clarkson, “A Program for Binational Development,” in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1966), 355-6.

¹¹⁹ Anthony Smith, *The Geopolitics of Information: How Western Culture Dominates the World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 52-4.

¹²⁰ Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 27.

¹²¹ Ostry, *The Cultural Connection*; Audley, *Canada's Cultural Industries*; Ted Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Michael Dorland, *The Cultural Industries in Canada: Problems, Policies and Prospects* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1996). A third more recent approach is a transnational perspective where the border may have more influence in political terms than in cultural, economic or social terms. See Michael Behiels and Reginald Stuart, eds. *Transnationalism: Canada-United States History into the Twenty-first Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010). For example, Reginald Stuart argues that a North American popular culture developed that did not smother Canadian culture and did not result in Americanization. See Reginald Stuart, “Borders and Brows: Mass Culture and National Identity in North America since 1900,” in *Transnationalism: Canada-United States History into the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Michael Behiels and Reginald Stuart (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

¹²² Zoe Druick, *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 3.

¹²³ Michael Dorland, “Review of Ted Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films*,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 31, no. 4, (Winter 1996-97), 178.

regards the state as synonymous with the nation.¹²⁴

While the study of cultural policy has been increasing in recent years, the study of sport policy has remained on the margins.¹²⁵ Donald Macintosh has been the main contributor to this area in Canada, having published several books and papers.¹²⁶ Bruce Kidd's important contribution in 1982 followed papers by Galasso and West and a short monograph by Broom and Baka that were all produced in the 1970s.¹²⁷ All of these works point to the 1960s as the key period in the development of sport policy, attributing it to increases in nationalism, state activity in the area of culture, and concerns about Americanization. This is the time period that will be explored in this dissertation.

Despite the increase in government's use of professional sport to further its objectives, very little research has been done in this area.¹²⁸ Harrison is one of the few

¹²⁴ Frank Underhill, "O Canada," *Canadian Forum* 10 (December, 1929), 80; Ramsey Cook, *The Maple Leaf* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1977), 175; Richard Gwyn, *The 49th Paradox: Canada in North America* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1985), 206.

¹²⁵ Michael Atkinson, *Governing Canada: Institutions and Public Policy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada, 1993), 17; Houlihan, "Public Sector," 163.

¹²⁶ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*; Macintosh and Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy*; Donald Macintosh, "Sport and the State: the Case of Canada," in *Sport . . . the Third Millennium*, ed. Fernand Landry, Marc Landry, and Magdeleine Yerles (Sainte-Foy, Quebec: Laval University Press, 1991); Donald Macintosh, "Sport and Government in Canada," in *National Sports Policies: An International Handbook*, ed. Laurence Chalip, Lisa Stachura, and Arthur Johnson (Westport, Ct : Greenwood Press, 1996).

¹²⁷ Kidd, "Sport, Dependency," Galasso, P.J. "Involvement of the Canadian Federal Government in Sport," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport & Physical Education*, 3, no. 2 (1972); West, J.T. "Physical Fitness, Sport and the Federal Government 1909 to 1954," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport & Physical Education* 4, no. 2 (1973); Eric Broom and Richard Baka, *Canadian Governments and Sport*, (Ottawa: CAHPER Sociology of Sports Monograph Series, 1978). A graduate thesis by William Hallett added to this scholarship (Hallett, *A History of Federal Government Involvement*).

¹²⁸ Nils Asle Bergsgard, Barrie Houlihan, Per Mangset, Svein Ingve Nødland, and Hilmar Rommetvedt. *Sport Policy: A Comparative Analysis of Stability and Change*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007, 70. The authors refer to commercial sport in Canada but ignore football concentrating on baseball, basketball and hockey.

scholars to examine sport policy and Canadian football. He makes the case that the Canadian government should intervene to support Canadian professional football as it contributes to the economy, national unity, identity, and remains a marker of difference between Canada and the United States.¹²⁹

2.9 Conclusion

This review of scholarship demonstrates the rich literature on sport and nationalism, and on nationalism and cultural policy in Canada. The literature on nationalism and sport policy, however, is limited. More specifically, little has been published on nationalism or sport policy related to football. Nevertheless, the existing literature provides a helpful frame for this study. It reveals that sport has historically been associated with the cultivation of nationalism. Existing scholarship documents how the Canadian state became active in cultural policy in the postwar period. It explains the rationale for this involvement as being a perception that an autonomous Canadian culture was indispensable to an independent Canadian nationhood. The state was the only entity deemed powerful enough to offset the commercial advantages of American culture. Canadian cultural policy evolved from a focus on high culture in the 1950s to a focus on more popular forms of culture by the 1960s. Sport had not yet been recognized as a legitimate focus of government policy, but the trend was clearly in that direction.

¹²⁹ Harrison, "The Case for Public," 8-9.

Chapter 3:

Nation-building and the Evolution of Canadian football: Inception to 1952

Understanding the evolution of Canadian football is vitally important to this study because it provides insight into why the game grew to be representative of the nation. Because of the sport's representative nature, the federal government eventually felt compelled to act to protect the game. The development of Canadian football from its origins in the 1860s until the 1950s when the game had grown to become an important national institution will be examined in this chapter. The focus is on how Canadian football came to be seen as a significant constituent of national identity, a sport that helped differentiate Canada from other nations. The reasons for this development were numerous and the ways in which they interacted over time complex, but two particular features are emphasized in this analysis. First, Canadian football developed unique rules that set it apart from the American game and discouraged continental integration. Second, the sport's growth was intertwined with transportation and communications developments that gave it, over time, a rough geographical congruence with Canadian territory. Football grew to become representative of Canadianness.

This early history of Canadian football from its origin in 1861 until a national championship and set of rules had been codified in 1916 can be periodized as follows: The University Game (1861-1874): Universities were the strongest influence in the development of Canadian football until the railway transported the game to numerous towns and cities.

Central Canadian Popularization (1874-1896). In 1874 the first inter-provincial competition took place, signalling the popularity of the game in central Canada. By 1896 a national championship had been organized in central Canada and a national body had formed, setting the stage for greater growth.

National Consolidation (1888-1916). By 1888 teams and leagues had formed across the country and media coverage helped the sport grow in popularity. In 1909 teams began to compete for the Grey Cup, a national championship, and shortly after teams were able to travel across the nation playing Canadian football.

By 1916, when organized Canadian football stopped because of the War, teams had been formed across Canada, and a national championship and a standardized way of playing had been established. Teams now travelled across the country for competition, the game was being covered by the media nationwide, and the representative nature of the game was evident as fans had grown connected to the game and their favourite teams.

3.1 The University Game: 1861 – 1874

In 1823, William Webb Ellis of Rugby school in England, allegedly picked up the ball during a game of soccer and ran with it.¹ The result was a game that eventually evolved into Rugby Football and spread throughout the British Empire. The game, along with many other British forms of recreation, arrived in British North America along with immigrants from Britain. Tracing the origin and evolution of early Canadian football during its first century in Canada demonstrates the constant tension between colonial

¹ While the game is called football in the rest of the world, it is known as soccer in North America.

Canada and the two powers that influenced it most: its British mother country and its American neighbour to the south. In some ways Canadian football can be viewed as anti-imperialist, a cultural expression of resistance first to Britain, and later to the United States. A pillar of Canadian nationalism from colonial times to the First World War was a commitment to the development of a distinct Canadian identity married to a resentment toward the cultural influence and territorial ambitions of the United States.² Canada's struggle to resist Americanization and become a separate nation was evident in the effort to maintain a Canadian form of football.

The first recorded game of football in Canada occurred in 1861 at the University of Toronto. As early as 1864 Trinity College in Toronto had published the first set of rules for the game in Canada.³ Organized sport at this time was limited to the leisured male upper class, and two groups enjoying this status in society were university students and military officers. Because of their status, they were influential members of society and their leisure time-activities held sway among other citizens. The domination of sports by these upper-class males legitimated their status in the community and ensured the masculine nature of sport.⁴ Indeed the masculine sports culture became naturalized through school-based sport. Military officers in British North America were playing

² Watt, "Nationalism in Canadian Literature," 239-241; William Baker, "A Case Study of Anti-Americanism in English-Speaking Canada: The Election Campaign of 1911," *Canadian Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (December 1970); Allan Smith, "Canadian Culture, the Canadian State, and the Management of the New Continentalism," in *Canada: An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind*, ed. Allan Smith (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), 97-100.

³ "Rugby Football History," accessed October 14, 2015, www.rugbyfootballhistory.com/canada.html.

⁴ Wamsley, "The Public Importance of Men," 75.

rugby as early as 1862 with additional games documented in Montreal in 1863 and 1864.⁵ In addition, the Navy was responsible for introducing rugby to Nova Scotia and British Columbia shortly after this time.⁶

Because rugby football grew to be popular among the influential military elite and at educational institutions, the game quickly became organized and thrived. Much of the early growth originated in Montreal, with students at McGill University devising a set of rules which spread throughout Quebec and into eastern Ontario, including Kingston and Ottawa. A Canadian football association was set up in 1873 and a challenge cup for a championship was offered in Montreal. Games were being played in Atlantic Canada by 1870 and on the west coast by 1876.⁷ Communication and travel presented such challenges that one national set of rules could not be established or enforced and the first association soon disappeared.⁸

Educational institutions such as McGill University, Royal Military College, Queen's University, Trinity College, the University of Toronto, and Upper Canada College were among the first to organize teams. Toronto was a hotbed of activity in the 1860s with teams formed at the Toronto School of Medicine, Osgoode Hall, The Ontario Agricultural School, and The Toronto Normal School (Teachers' College). Football,

⁵ Gordon Currie, *100 Years of Canadian Football* (Toronto: Pagurian Press, 1968), 17; Melvin Smith, *Early American & Canadian Football: Beginnings Through 1883/84* (Bloomington, Indiana: Authorhouse, 2003), 17.

⁶ Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*, 74; "Rugby Football History."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*, 56.

played in the fall when university was in session, soon became known as the “university game” and these teams dominated the first championships. University teams won the first six national finals, and twelve of the first seventeen. Football teams representing schools were represented in twenty of the first twenty-six championship games.⁹

Sport at this time was decidedly amateur and geared toward demonstrating moral character, perseverance, self-control, and intelligence.¹⁰ The cult of amateurism was a way for the leisured upper class to exclude the lower orders and keep sport a gentlemen’s pastime. Motivation for participation was to be strictly limited to playing for the love of the game without any expectation of remuneration. The best football was thought to emphasize intellect and teamwork over brawn, and football became known as a scientific game. Football meshed the physical with the mental, which made it a natural fit for the universities. While some saw the game as violent, others emphasized its scientific side and viewed the physical contact as secondary.¹¹ Canadian football successfully avoided the violent label attached to the game in the United States.¹²

The Victorian belief in Muscular Christianity, the idea that participation in sport, particularly amateur team sports, would develop positive masculine character traits including morality, discipline and patriotism, took hold in Canada. Muscular Christianity emphasized strategic, physical team games in the belief that proper participation in the

⁹ *Official Rules of Canadian Rugby Football* (Toronto: Spalding, 1958), 97.

¹⁰ Oriard, *Reading Football*, 190, 201.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹² When American football was threatened with being banned because of its violent nature, American organizers used the Canadian game as a model in an effort to make the game less violent.

appropriate sports would help males develop into ideal citizens. Involvement was to be primarily for self-improvement and character development. This link between appropriate physical activity and superior moral values would soon transfer easily from religion to nationalism. Associated with this ideology was the notion that rule-bound sports would help maintain an orderly society, always a concern for the elite as the Industrial Revolution resulted in a chaotic transition from a predominantly rural society to an urban one. Because football adhered to the amateur, character-building tenets of Muscular Christianity, it became attractive to influential classes in Canadian society. The principles associated with Muscular Christianity were instrumental in sport receiving support from schools, businesses, and organized religion. With industrialization, leisure time developed, and sport helped fill excess time, making it even more important. As such, it became a powerful cultural form that could contribute to the development of a national identity.¹³ Football had so many positive associations that many males of the middle class clamoured to join the educated elite in playing the game.¹⁴

During the Industrial Revolution, the doctrine of Muscular Christianity served to counteract the evils of urbanization. There was concern that, without the physical challenges of farming, hunting or fishing, young boys growing up in an urban environment would be feminized. It was thought that sport could offset this trend.¹⁵

¹³ Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism*, 36; Howell, *Blood Sweat and Cheers*, 132.

¹⁴ Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 35.

¹⁵ The fear of the decline in manliness led Baron Pierre de Coubertin to organize the Modern Olympic Games in 1896. See Eugen Weber, "Pierre de Coubertin and the Introduction of Organized Sport in France," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 2 (1970).

Canadian football, like many other sports at this time, could provide “a stepping stone out of the family of women and into the world of men” by teaching a certain type of masculinity.¹⁶ Sport, particularly football, was a masculinizing project that reinforced masculine hegemony.¹⁷ Football was valued in part because it contributed to the formation of this prized type of masculinity and differentiated between men and women at a time that differences seemed to be declining.¹⁸ The belief that football could play a role in preserving a certain type of masculinity contributed to the game’s importance in society. Muscular Christianity mirrored the Canadian identity forming at the time in that it was rugged, masculine, and Victorian.

As the game spread, it was only a matter of time before Canadians exported the pastime. Although culture usually flowed northward over the border, in this case it moved the other way. Canada exported the game of football to the United States. In May of 1874, a team representing McGill University traveled to Massachusetts to challenge Harvard. Players from the McGill team arrived to see a game called football being played, but with a round ball and very little use of hands. The two schools decided to play two matches over two days, one game to be played by each school’s set of rules. Harvard

¹⁶ Burstyn, *The Rites of Men*, 45.

¹⁷ Hall, “Cultural Struggle and Resistance,” 56.

¹⁸ Sheard and Dunning attribute rugby’s popularity in England in part to its rough nature and its exclusion of women. See Kenneth Sheard and Eric Dunning, “The Rugby Football Club as a type of Male Preserve: Some Sociological Notes,” *International Review of Sports Sociology* 8, no. 3 (1973), 6.

decided the McGill rules were superior and played a game against Tufts the next year.¹⁹ Football began to spread across the United States.²⁰

At the time of Confederation football emerged as a way to help imagine a nation. The 1860s, the time when football started to grow in Canada, were an important period of nation-building.²¹ Confederation was a catalyst for the development of Canadian national sentiment. There was a sincere effort on the part of many to establish in the new Dominion a sense of nationhood and to be different from the British and the Americans. After Confederation and the start of the withdrawal of the British military, sports in Canada slowly became less British and more Canadian. Canadian Football would become a unique, indigenous cultural activity that could be used to differentiate Canada from Britain and the United States.

3.2 Central Canadian Popularization: 1874 – 1896

The construction of transportation and communications infrastructure on an east-west axis has been a prominent feature of Canadian nation building. The building of the Canadian Pacific Railway is often interpreted as a great nation-building project that secured the young nation's future.²² The railway greatly increased the speed of transportation and communication across Canada's vast territory, making it cheaper and more convenient to move goods, people, ideas and information. In 1850, there was just

¹⁹ Smith, *Early American & Canadian Football*, 37.

²⁰ Currie, *100 Years of Canadian Football*, 20; Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years*, 1.

²¹ Poulter, *Becoming Native*, 66.

²² Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 136

one hundred miles of track in Canada. Thirty years later there was more than 7,000 miles and by the end of the century almost 18,000 miles.²³ Travel by boat or road was slow, seasonal, and weather dependent. Travel by rail was fast and more reliable.

The railway contributed to the growth and spread of organized sport in general and football in particular. Competitions between towns became easier. In 1874 a football team made up of players from Ontario travelled by train to represent their province against Quebec in the first example of inter-provincial play. The *Montreal Gazette* reported that no sporting event in 1874 “caused more excitement.”²⁴

Trains carried not only teams and supporters, but the games themselves to new areas. By the 1880s it was common for teams to be criss-crossing Central Canada on trains to play Canadian football. Teams were formed in many larger and smaller centres. No longer were football teams associated primarily with educational institutions. Kingston, Ottawa, Peterborough, Hamilton, London, Guelph, St. Catharines, Petrolia, Sarnia, Stratford, Brockville, and Quebec City all had teams, while larger centres such as Montreal and Toronto sported numerous clubs.²⁵

Railways profited from offering special excursion fares to supporters to ride the rails with their team, further linking the players to the community. The railways benefited because often they owned the hotels that teams and supporters were staying in. During

²³ Samuel Moffett, *The Americanization of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 56; Vipond, *Mass Media in Canada*, 18.

²⁴ Wayne Parrish and Jim O’Leary, *Double Blue: An Illustrated History of the Toronto Argonauts* (Toronto: ECX Press, 2007), 28.

²⁵ Robert Sproule, “The Ontario Rugby Football Union: 1883-1906,” *The Coffin Corner*, Vol. 7 (1985 Annual).

the Depression of the 1880s, when the railways were struggling financially, sports such as football became an even more important source of revenue.²⁶

As sports spread, agreed-upon rules were necessary and standardization resulted. The employment of boundaries, regulation, standardization, specialization, and bureaucratization are all characteristics of modernization.²⁷ This was evident in Canadian football as a rules consensus helped the game spread. What made Canadian football Canadian, and different from British rugby, was its rules. Rules were important for defining a game, and ensuring safety, fair play and order, but could also be used to provide identity by associating a particular community with a unique form of sport. Changing the rules was a way to indigenize a sport, linking it to the nation by making it distinctive.

The transformation of English rugby to Canadian football created a distinctive sport that became a uniquely Canadian activity. This transformation began shortly after the game of English rugby football was introduced to British North America, and the Canadian game quickly evolved into something far different from English rugby. Football historian Ian Speers suggests that Canadian rules as opposed to English rules quickly spread and were common throughout Quebec and Ontario in the 1870s.²⁸ By then

²⁶ Trevor Williams, "Cheap Rates, Special Trains and Canadian Sport in the 1850s," *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport* 12, no. 2 (1981), 90.

²⁷ See Allen Guttman, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

²⁸ Ian Speers, "The First Game of the Toronto Argonauts: A Discussion," *From Scrimmage to Snapback*, Fall 2003, 9.

different rules regarding the size of the field, the number of players, and the scoring system were in use.²⁹

In the United States, it was also the elite at universities that first took to the game. Once rail travel was firmly entrenched in Canadian society, Canadian teams were challenging American clubs. Soon this became difficult as the rule differences were too great. Games between American and Canadian teams had occurred since 1874 but in 1882 the Britannia football club refused to play Harvard because of the differences in the two games. McGill had ceased its annual battle with Harvard the previous year.³⁰ The American game featured a line of scrimmage and a snapback, fewer players, blocking (called interference), and a system of downs to turn the ball over to the other team. Canada was caught in a familiar situation. Organizers were faced with the choice between welcoming these drastic changes or attempting to maintain a measure of independence while continuing to develop the new Canadian game. The challenge was evident after an international game in 1876 that pitted a team representing Canada against a team from the United States. After the game, the Canadian captain Walter H. Perram pleaded

The argument is made 'How can we compete against Americans if we stick to our old style of play? My answer is 'Why play against them at all?' We would be much better to forgo those international matches and play Canadian football, instead of their [game]. In our Harvard game there was not a man on their team who could make a drop kick. If we adopt this

²⁹ Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years*, 13.

³⁰ "Football," *Montreal Gazette*, October 9, 1882, 8; Currie, *100 Years*, 22.

American formation I am afraid we shall never again see a real football match in Canada.³¹

Despite pressure to play the American version of the game, “Canadian footballers stubbornly refused to alter the game they had created.”³² As one sport historian claimed, these early organizers of sport in Canada “appear to have been fervent Canadian nationalists.”³³ By 1887, cross-border games seem to have disappeared in Central Canada.³⁴

The north-south pull of continentalism meant that Canadian football, like Canadian culture, would always need to resist the lure of American influence. While the story of Canadian culture is usually one of fearing American domination, resistance was much more prominent when it came to the development of Canadian football. In Canada there was consistent resistance to adopting too many aspects of the American game. The distinctive Canadian game was influenced by the interest in pursuing a distinct Canadian identity and the fact that the formation of the Canadian game preceded the American.

³¹ Roxborough, *One Hundred-not Out*, 128.

³² S.F. Wise, “Sport and Class Values in Old Ontario and Quebec,” in Morris Mott, *Sports in Canada: Historical Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1989), 121.

³³ West, “Physical Fitness,” 27.

³⁴ Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*, 56; Gerald Gems, *For Pride, Profit, and Patriarchy: Football and the Incorporation of American Cultural Values* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 13. It is likely that some cross-border games continued, but records of games between established teams are rare. The games did resume and became more common after the First World War but the two forms of football were so different that each half had to be played using different rules. See “Detroit to play Half Under Canadian Rules,” *Toronto Star*, November 18, 1924, 10 where the University of Detroit and the University of Toronto each had coaching on how to play under opposing rules.

Between 1882 and 1892, Yale University head coach Walter Camp, known as the Father of American football, dramatically changed the rules being used in the United States. Some of these rules were proposed for the Canadian game, but they were rejected by early organizers as being “too American.”³⁵ A major change occurred in American football in 1882 with a rule designed to have ball possession change more often. Canadians resisted this rule. A report from a meeting in 1884 revealed organizers refused to consider “anything approaching the American style of scrimmages.”³⁶

While other sports in Canada evolved continentally, Canadian football was different. There was now a nationalist sense of ownership of the Canadian version of the game. A distinctly Canadian game could help citizens imagine themselves as Canadian, and that involved resisting the Americanization of culture, including the Americanization of Canadian football.³⁷

By 1884 the Canadian Rugby Football Union was formed to organize a national final. The Montreal Football Club defeated the Toronto Argonauts in the first CRFU championship game. The first organized national championships were anything but organized as in subsequent years a championship game was not always held, and they were anything but national as only teams from Ontario or Quebec competed. While the scope of the championship may have been limited, having a national championship did much to raise the profile of the game and further attach it to the nation. In another effort to establish the way to play Canadian football, the Canadian Rugby Union (CRU) was

³⁵ Robert Sproule, “Snap-Back vs. Scrimmage,” *From Scrimmage to SnapBack* (Fall 2003), 6.

³⁶ Everett-Green, “The Game that Binds,” *Globe and Mail*, November 24, 2012, S1.

³⁷ Poulter, *Becoming Native*, 3, 120.

formed in 1891 to oversee the game. In 1892 it attempted to once again establish a national championship. By 1895 Quebec and Ontario had established junior, intermediate and senior leagues. Rules affecting timing, scoring and field of play were modified with another rule book published in 1896, as football continued to grow in popularity.³⁸

3.3 National Consolidation: 1888 – 1916

The completion of a national railway opened up the possibility of standardizing sports across Canada and holding national championships that would feature the best teams from across the country. The train carried Canadian football west to the Prairies in the 1880s.³⁹ The North West Mounted Police, which held a social position analogous to that of the military in the rest of Canada, organized the first teams on the prairies.⁴⁰ The Canadian Pacific Railway arrived in Calgary in 1883 and within one week there was a rugby football game. A league was established in Manitoba by 1888 and soon after there was play between teams from all across the prairies.⁴¹ British Columbia had formed a league by 1889 and one representing the Maritime Provinces began play in 1890.⁴² Just

³⁸ The rulebook is mentioned in Robert Sproule, “Canadian Football: Past To Present,” *The Coffin Corner* Vol. 13, No. 1 (1991), 2. The growth in popularity that year is discussed in Sproule, “The Ontario Rugby Football Union,” 17.

³⁹ Hal Sigurdson, “The Early Years,” in *Blue & Gold: 75 Years of Blue Bomber Glory*, ed. Bob Irving (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publishing, 2005), 20.

⁴⁰ Patrick Lamb, *A History of Rugby Football in Edmonton*, (MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 1990), 11.

⁴¹ Cosentino, *A History*; Robert Sproule, “Canadian Football—Western Style,” *From Scrimmage to Snapback*, Winter 2004, 15.

⁴² Mathew Brown, Patrick Guthrie, and Greg Growden, *Rugby for Dummies* (Mississauga: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 235.

as the railroad was integral in the construction of the Canadian nation, it was instrumental in the spread of organized sport. In 1891 the Calgary-to-Edmonton railway was completed and what would become an important Alberta provincial football rivalry was born shortly after.⁴³ Canadian football had spread across the country.

Canadian football arose during the “golden age of print,” an era when more newspapers and periodicals reached a larger and more varied audience than ever before, and when the print media enjoyed great power.⁴⁴ Increasing rates of literacy, new printing and paper production technologies, and improved distribution and marketing “contributed to a revolution in reading of incalculable importance.”⁴⁵ By the 1880s most cities across the country had at least one daily newspaper, and in many cases, as daily newspapers were established, football teams were also started. Both served to “boost” the fortunes of a municipality. Some football teams were formed by placing ads in the newspaper. Practice times and locations were published in the papers as well as lists of players wanted at the next practice. The paper would castigate some for not showing up for practice and implore others to appear. In 1895 the *Edmonton Bulletin* exhorted the local football teams to wake up and challenge Calgary or concede provincial football supremacy.⁴⁶ Players were even informed via the newspaper where they could pick up

⁴³ Lamb, *Rugby Football in Edmonton*, 19.

⁴⁴ Oriard, *Reading Football*, XIX.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 14, 1895, cited in Hall, *Game Plan*, 294.

their uniforms.⁴⁷ Advertisements were placed in the newspapers of other cities challenging teams to games. Supporters would write letters to their newspaper asking rail companies to offer special excursion fares to encourage more people to attend games to support their team.⁴⁸

Papers grew with urbanization as daily newspaper circulation in Canada between 1880 and 1900 tripled.⁴⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, there were 121 daily newspapers covering the country and the literacy rate had climbed to 90 percent.⁵⁰ As the most important source of information and community formation, the newspaper became very powerful. Books, newspapers, and magazines had been targeted to the privileged classes until the “penny newspapers” emerged. Unlike the partisan press that preceded them, these people’s dailies were not financially dependent on political parties. They earned revenue from advertising, subscriptions, and newsstand sales and focused more on entertainment, local news, and sports in an effort to sell papers.

The newspapers and sport had a symbiotic relationship. The former gained readers, sales and advertising by sensationalizing sports, while the latter received publicity that increased its popularity, status and profitability. Soon newspapers featured a separate section devoted to sport. Supporting the local team encouraged civic pride and

⁴⁷ Bob Calder and Garry Andrews, *Rider Pride: The Story of Canada’s Best-Loved Football Team* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1984), 7.

⁴⁸ Williams, “Cheap Rates,” 88.

⁴⁹ Vipond, *Mass Media in Canada*, 24.

⁵⁰ Stacy Lorenz, “‘In the Field of Sport at Home and Abroad’: Sports Coverage in Canadian Daily Newspapers, 1850-1914,” *Sport History Review* 34, no. 2 (November 2003), 136; Vipond, *Mass Media in Canada*, 20.

community spirit.⁵¹ Sport had become a popular recreational activity that was able to capture the imagination of a large portion of the population.

As early as the 1890s, Canadian football games had become popular public events. Newspapers were devoting considerable space to the sport, occasionally giving it front page treatment. Coverage of sport in Montreal papers increased from about 1 percent of the paper in 1870 to 10 percent by 1900. Sport coverage tripled in *La Presse* between 1885 and 1914.⁵² Increased attention made sport more important and created more excitement surrounding the games. During football season, the *Globe* allocated almost half a page on Mondays to the game. Close to half of the Montreal newspaper sports coverage was dedicated to football.⁵³ By 1914 the three most popular sports in Canada as measured by newspaper coverage were hockey, football and lacrosse.⁵⁴ Almost half of Toronto newspaper sports coverage during the football season was devoted to football in 1905, and by 1915 the majority of sports coverage in Toronto papers during the season was allocated to football.⁵⁵

Newspapers offered play-by-play accounts of recently played games. Crowds in the thousands were attending games, encouraged by the coverage in the newspapers.⁵⁶ It is not a coincidence that football started to grow when newspapers became ubiquitous in

⁵¹ Lorenz, "In the Field," 133.

⁵² Ibid., 143; Vipond, *Mass Media in Canada*, 24.

⁵³ Allan Elton Cox, "Sport in Canada," in *History of Sport in Canada*, ed. Maxwell L. Howell, and Reet A. Howell (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing Company, 1981), 133; Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*, 61.

⁵⁴ Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*, 54.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁶ Currie, *100 Years of Canadian Football*, 28.

Canadian society. It was through the newspapers that most Canadians first discovered Canadian football. The media interpreted football for those who could not experience the game first hand and played an important role in constructing meaning and linking the game to the local community and the nation.⁵⁷

The spread of the railway brought with it telegraph wires linking the nation, and allowed newspapers and magazines wider distribution. The telegraph meant that information could be gathered and disseminated more easily across wider spaces. As with the railway and newspaper, the telegraph helped forge Canada. “Paper and telegraph wire, it soon became apparent, had replaced rivers and sailing vessels as the dominant media of communication,” wrote Gerald Friesen. “The nation of Canada owes its birth to them.”⁵⁸ The telegraph could bridge time and space, directly linking audiences to where the news was being made, and in doing so uniting Canadians. Communication helped shape commonality “making the move from local isolation to national connectedness.”⁵⁹ National institutions were constructed using communication as the nation became tied to literacy and print. With the telegraph, newspapers facilitated national conversations and sustained a frame of mind that could be thought of for the first time as national, drawing Canadians into a single community.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ This process was greatly assisted by the Canadian Press which began to distribute news in 1910 and, assisted by the federal government in 1917, began to distribute Canadian news throughout the country. See Gene Allen, *Making National News: A History Of Canadian Press* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

⁵⁸ Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 140.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

The telegraph resulted in standardized newspaper reporting. This in turn helped create a national audience for sporting events. Soon the same articles about football appeared in papers across the country. A national sporting community was created by this standardized coverage. With the spread of the daily press throughout Canada people had access to a shared body of information about Canadian football. In this way, the telegraph and newspapers contributed to the development of football as part of the national culture. Standardized sports coverage created a mass audience for Canadian football and accelerated the popularity of the game.⁶¹

As sporting rivalries developed among towns and cities, rivalries for new residents, the railway, or resources such as schools and businesses also emerged. Football teams were often created by local boosters. Civic leaders used sports teams to boost their towns when competing for limited resources. Residents of a town or city could identify with the success of a team, and a strong team could help a city be viewed as a successful, progressive place. Fan interest and support were important measures of civic spirit. Businesses sponsored teams to identify themselves with the community that provided them with their labour-force. Connections endured between town, players, and teams. In this way the development of football in Canada was linked to heritage, community and identity, not just business, commerce and profit.

One of the most important roles the newspaper played at this time was to help forge civic identity. Newspapers were valuable advertising for sports teams just as the teams themselves advertised the town. Sports teams representing municipalities became an

⁶¹ Lorenz, "A Lively Interest," 204, 209, 213.

important component of the construction of local identities. Participants were locals who represented their town vying to demonstrate its superiority.⁶² In addition, the team could unite a diverse population and create a civic consciousness. Eventually teams were less likely to be comprised of just the elite as football spread across social classes. Linkages were formed between the teams, the players and the town. According to author Stephen Brunt, the players on the team were “family or friends or neighbours, or at the furthest remove, strangers who came from the place you called home. Gathering to support them was a shared, collective purpose . . . the act of being part of a larger whole.” Brunt continues, “[t]o celebrate one of our own in competition with athletes from a place near or far away was to celebrate [a common set of] core values.”⁶³

The game was designed to be played not watched, but, lured by the media, spectators flocked to cheer on “their” side. Non-participants, both male and female, were encouraged to support the team. Watching football and supporting a team became a suitable pastime for men, women, children and entire families. Press accounts of football games included narratives of men and women as football supporters, embedding football in the social world of the time. Watching football contributed to creating community as spectatorship crossed barriers of class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and occupation.⁶⁴ As the game became more democratic it grew in power as a marker of identity that could represent more citizens. As Oriard proposes, football became more than just a game when

⁶² Having local players was an important part of boosting. When semi-professional hockey teams on the prairies started to import players, interest decreased. See Hall, *Game Plan*, 121.

⁶³ Brunt, “The Changing Face of Sport,” 80.

⁶⁴ Oriard, *Reading Football*, 4.

its teams came to represent a town, city, region, province and eventually, even the nation.⁶⁵ In so doing it became more inclusive and developed more extensive cultural implications. As an athletic practice, football was open primarily to young males, but as a cultural text it was available to everyone.⁶⁶

The formation of loyalties, tensions, and mythic urban rivalries was a natural outgrowth of sports teams representing towns. The media often played a key role in the creation of these rivalries which in turn reinforced local identities. With advances in transportation and communication technology it was natural for a municipality to challenge nearby towns to sporting competitions. Hamilton and Toronto, Edmonton and Calgary, Montreal and Ottawa established football rivalries that now date back more than a century. As time passed, then, football gained a temporal dimension—it was a “tradition” that went back generations, and this gave it even greater cultural weight. Canadian football represented Canada to its citizens by using the nation as the arena for regional rivalries. Football changed from an athletic contest to a social event and eventually, with the help of the newspaper, became a popular spectacle.⁶⁷

However, just as advances in communication could distribute news and information throughout the Dominion, these same advances brought foreign content into the lives of Canadians. Newspapers in Canada had access to American articles distributed on wire

⁶⁵ Ibid., xxii. For more on the representative nature of sport in the Canadian context see Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 13; Dave Whitson, “Hockey and Canadian Popular Culture: The Making and Remaking of Identities,” in *Method and Methodology in Sport and Cultural History*, ed. K.B. Wamsley (Dubuque: A Times Mirror Higher Education Group, 1995), 193; Lorenz, “In the Field,” 149.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 249, 275.

⁶⁷ Ibid., XVIII, 4

services. It was less expensive to print an article from one of the American wire services than to pay a reporter to cover a story. American coverage increased in newspapers north of the border and Canadians were introduced to many aspects of American culture, including professional sport.⁶⁸ The newspapers in some cases glamourized American professional sport, with its larger audiences and increased media coverage, and turned American athletes into household names in Canada.⁶⁹ Soon American professional sport was viewed as “major league” sport north of the border.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, the standardization of Canadian football rules continued. After many of the American rules were dismissed, there was a major shift to adopt one set of rules for the country with most unions adopting the rules of the Canadian Rugby Union by 1906. The Canadian way of playing differed from the way the American game was played. There were 14 players a side, three downs to make ten yards, a one yard barrier at the line of scrimmage, and different scoring rules.⁷¹

In 1893 Governor General Stanley had donated a trophy for the sport of hockey, and in 1901 Governor General Minto supplied a cup for the sport of lacrosse. In 1909 Governor General Lord Grey, a vigorous promoter of Canadian unity, donated a trophy for the rugby football championship of Canada. The trophy became highly sought after with league champions from a variety of regions vying for the chance to compete for it.

⁶⁸ Stacy Lorenz, “‘Bowling Down to Babe Ruth’: Major League Baseball and Canadian Popular Culture, 1920-1929,” *Sport History Review* 26, no. 1 (May 1995).

⁶⁹ Kidd, *The Struggle*, 229-30.

⁷⁰ Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night*, 95-6.

⁷¹ Sproule, “The Ontario Rugby Football Union,” 25.

The Grey Cup game was soon promoted by the media, providing a common annual experience for Canadians. In one game played to determine which team would vie for the first Grey Cup game in 1909, more than 2,000 fans arrived in Toronto from out-of-town. In the other game, 12,000 fans packed a venue with a capacity of only 3,400. Reporters from newspapers in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and two papers from New York covered the first Grey Cup.⁷² In 1910 special train cars were added to transport football fans to Hamilton for the Grey Cup Game. The stadium was well over capacity as more than 12,000 fans purchased admission and counterfeit tickets appeared.⁷³ Fans anxious to get in toppled the gates and fences surrounding the park. Even more fans packed the stadium in Toronto in 1911, some lining-up to purchase tickets two days before they went on sale. Demand was so high that carpenters worked day-and-night to build extra seating at the last minute. Forty newspaper reporters applied for permission to cover the game.⁷⁴ That same year the Western Canadian Rugby Football Union issued a challenge for the right to play for the Grey Cup.

In 1913 the railway would take a team from Hamilton, Ontario, west across the country on the first national Canadian football tour. The Hamilton team played four games in eight days against prairie opponents in front of thousands of fans at each stop.⁷⁵ The railway had initially allowed for football games to be contested between towns and

⁷² Michael Januska, *Grey Cup Century* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012), 13-6.

⁷³ Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years*, 33-4.

⁷⁴ Januska, *Grey Cup Century*, 23-5.

⁷⁵ Lou Goodwin, *Fall Madness: A History of Senior and Professional Football in Calgary* (Calgary: Calgary Stampeder Football Club, 1979), 3.

cities separated by hundreds of kilometres. Eventually, this included provincial rivalries. Now it had evolved into an east-west encounter. Just as the Grey Cup trophy became important in uniting the disparate football unions, before the start of the First World War Canadian football had become a national symbol used to unite the nation.

By the early 1900s railways, the telegraph, and newspapers had transformed Canadian football. In early Canada, sport was tied to towns, cities and regions as the country was too large for national competition. Early in the new century, with improved travel and a renewed sense of nation, sport started to contribute to the development of a national community as true national championships became possible and popular.⁷⁶

3.4 Canadian Football, Americanization, and Resistance

Canadian identity has been constructed on the idea of resistance, more specifically, resisting the American “other.”⁷⁷ While Canadian football was evolving, a number of articles appeared in the Canadian media expressing concern about Americanization.⁷⁸ As one observer put it in 1889, “American papers, magazines, books, [and] periodicals, . . . fill Canadian homes . . . daily intercourse popularizes the same peculiarities, slang expressions, and technical words throughout the continent.”⁷⁹ Canada’s postmaster

⁷⁶ Kidd believes that the sporting system became arguably the most visible manifestation of a Canadian nation, quoted in Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 144.

⁷⁷ John Holmes, “Canadian Foreign Policy,” in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 204; Laura Mulvey, “Magnificent Obsession,” *Parachute* (March/April/May 1986), 10; Kymlicka, “Being Canadian,” 368.

⁷⁸ Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996), 182.

⁷⁹ James W. Bell, “The Future of Canada,” *The Week*, July 1889, 539.

general lamented “Our theatres, sports, magazines, newspapers, are all more or less of the Yankee sort.”⁸⁰ While some Canadians accepted and even welcomed this fate, others resisted. Journalist Mercer Adam noted in 1889 that “we talk with horror of political annexation, yet we pay no heed to the annexation of another kind, which is drafting off across the line not only the brains and pens of the country, but the hopes and hearts of those who move and inspire them.”⁸¹

There was a sincere effort on the part of many to establish in the new Dominion a sense of nationhood. The intelligentsia played an important role in working towards this goal. Canada First, an English-Canadian nationalist movement dedicated to greater Canadian autonomy and independence from the United States, formed amid the patriotic fervour that followed Confederation. It was responsible for establishing the *Canadian Monthly and National Review* in part to decrease Canadian dependence on American periodicals.

The Conservatives won the 1891 federal election by attacking a Liberal reciprocity proposal as a slippery slope towards annexation by the United States. The election, referred to as the “Loyalty Election,” was portrayed as a battle between the British-loving Conservatives and the Yankee-loving Liberals.⁸² In reality it was a struggle between two

⁸⁰ Quoted in A.D. Gilbert, “On the Road to New York: The Protective Impulse and the English-Canadian Cultural Identity, 1896-1914” *Dalhousie Review* 58, no. 3 (1978), 410.

⁸¹ Quoted in A.G. Bailey, “Literature and Nationalism after Confederation,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 25 (July 1956), 411.

⁸² Christopher Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada: Macdonald, Laurier, and the Election of 1891* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2011), xiii.

nationalisms.⁸³ With the Laurier boom of the 1890s that followed, and settlement of the west, Canada's future seemed assured. It was in this nationalistic climate that Canadian football evolved.

Football in Canada was not immune to Americanization. J.M. "Thrift" Burnside, captain of the University of Toronto side, proposed new rules in 1898, selecting what he thought were the best rules from the American game to be added to the Canadian rules. For decades most of these rules were resisted, and, when finally a few were adopted, including the snapback from centre, blocking, and the abolishment of the sideline throw-in, some Canadian players "deplored what they called the Americanization of rugby by the introduction of the new rules and plays."⁸⁴ Canadian teams that used American coaches or players were criticized for employing American "trickery."⁸⁵ McGill University was widely criticized in 1912 when it became the first team in Canada to hire a full-time coach. The fact that the coach was an American led to the team being constantly criticized for employing "American tactics."⁸⁶

The cross-border influence could, however, flow both ways. In 1905 influential American coach Walter Camp visited Hamilton to view a game of Canadian football. He noted that Canadian football featured a "quite radically different" scoring system, no fair catches, differences in the number of players and timing of the games, among many other

⁸³ Ibid., 285.

⁸⁴ Howell and Howell, *Sports and Games*, 81.

⁸⁵ Wise and Fisher, *Canada's Sporting Heroes*, 36.

⁸⁶ Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years*, 50.

rule variances. He praised the Canadian game, noting that it was more wide-open. He lamented the absence of interference (or blocking) but noted that the game was more “rapid” than the American game. He was impressed by the “longer. . . more frequent open runs” and the “quickened . . . play.” Shortly after Camp’s visit, American football adopted the Canadian rule that a team must make 10 yards for a first down but added one down to give a team four tries to make the ten yards.⁸⁷

In 1907, an article in the *Edmonton Bulletin* called for prairie teams to abandon rugby and adopt the superior game of Canadian football.⁸⁸ In 1909 the *New York Herald* newspaper arranged a game between teams from Ottawa and Hamilton to be played in New York to showcase Canadian football to key American officials. These officials were under pressure to change their game because of the number of injuries and deaths. Coaches or team captains from Army, Harvard, Princeton, Pennsylvania and New York University were on hand as well as Walter Camp and Amos Alonzo Stagg, the two most influential football organizers in the United States. The *New York Times* reported that the games were so different that many American fans could not follow what was taking place on the field.⁸⁹ The *Ottawa Citizen* bragged how a “surprising number felt the Canadian game was better. . . The free, open punting, the long passing and the influence of mass

⁸⁷ Walter Camp, “Walter Camp’s Ideas of the Snap Back Game,” *Hamilton Spectator*, November 3, 1905, 8. While the two games were different they did share many rules. Despite resistance to the incorporation of American rules some were included in the Canadian game. Eventually interference (blocking) and the snapback (the pass back from centre to start a play) were incorporated into the Canadian game in an effort to improve the game. See “Adopt Forward Pass and Interference,” *Toronto Star*, October 22, 1924, 13.

⁸⁸ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, November 20, 1907, 9 cited in Lamb, *A History of Rugby Football*, 28.

⁸⁹ “Rugby Football at Van Cortland,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1909, S1.

play must have struck the American footballers as a vast improvement over their game”⁹⁰ While the rules for Canadian football were influencing the American game, the adoption of American rules continued to be resisted by traditionalists out of fear of tainting what was often viewed as a superior game. As sport historian Alan Metcalfe wrote, “Football remained Canadian . . . and thus served as a visible symbol of something uniquely Canadian.”⁹¹

If the popularity of Canadian football reflected an interest in developing Canadian identity, it was a somewhat exclusive identity. As has been discussed, many people in Canada were excluded from the game and the alleged “championships.” By the First World War there was only one French-Canadian football team in Canada.⁹² In Canadian football, exclusion of French Canadians, the working class, aboriginals, immigrants and women helped produce an identity that was Anglophone, white, male and middle class. Regionalism was another barrier. That the football championship was not national was recognized by an editorial in the *Toronto Star* in 1908.⁹³ The editorial outlined the challenges presented by rule differences, geography and weather. Some of the same factors that seemed to divide the country also divided Canadian football.

The end of the Great War brought further attempts to construct a Canadian national spirit that was both less British and less American. Feelings of confidence that emerged

⁹⁰ “American Experts are Divided in their Views of Canadian Game,” *Ottawa Citizen*, December 13, 1909, 9.

⁹¹ Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*, 61.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ “Varsity Players are Confident of Victory,” *Toronto Star*, November 24, 1908, 10.

among Canadians as a result of the successful war effort furthered the nation-building process. A new burst of nationalism, among French-Canadians as well as English-Canadians, was stimulated partially by pride in Canada's accomplishments in the First World War, and partly in reaction against the growing Americanization of Canadian society. During the first few years after the war the Association of Canadian Clubs, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, the League of Nations Society in Canada, the Canadian League, and the Native Sons of Canada were all created to foster patriotism and help construct an English-Canadian identity. The development of the same communications and transportation network that helped spread Canadian football, allowed for the growth of what Mary Vipond called a "nationalist network."⁹⁴ The nationalist network worked to resist American culture and construct an official national culture focusing primarily on elite high culture. At the same time, an unofficial popular culture which included sport was also forming. It too struggled to resist becoming Americanized.

With a national championship and leagues covering the majority of the country, Canadian football grew in popularity and became more attached to a Canadian national identity. Just like the railway and the media, Canadian football could help bind the nation. The railway and the media also played a huge role in promoting Canadian football and each promoted the others. Canadian football, according to Hayes became "a genuine and potentially liberating form of cultural expression."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Vipond, "The Nationalist Network."

⁹⁵ Hayes, *Blue Jay Fever*, 123.

3.5 Post First World War Canadian Sport

In 1920 Archibald MacMechan referred to Canada as a “vassal state,” utterly dependent on the U.S.⁹⁶ The author argued that most Canadians were blind to the subjugation of the Canadian nation’s mind and soul to American influences. The danger, he felt, lay in “peaceful penetration” and “spiritual bondage” fostering a “gradual assimilation.”⁹⁷ The Canadian newspaper, he asserted, was American, and American magazines flooded “our shops and book-stalls” while American movies taught Canadians the American experience.

American magazines did indeed flood Canada. As far back as 1907, the American based *Saturday Evening Post* sold more issues in Canada than all Canadian magazines combined and billed itself as Canada’s best-selling magazine.⁹⁸ More than three-hundred American magazines were available in Canada during the 1920s and collectively they sold more than fifty million copies.⁹⁹ By 1925 four American magazines had more circulation than *Maclean’s*. Eight American magazines were sold in Canada for every Canadian magazine.¹⁰⁰

The Canadian magazines that did exist were busy covering Canadian issues, including sport. While newspapers at this time served a local region, magazines targeted

⁹⁶ Archibald MacMechan, “Canada as a Vassal State,” *Canadian Historical Review* 1, (December, 1920), 347-53.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 374.

⁹⁸ Thompson, “Canada’s Quest,” 190; Vipond, *Mass Media*, 31.

⁹⁹ John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), 183.

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, “Canada’s Quest,” 190; Vipond *Mass Media*, 34.

a national territory and thus made a more direct contribution to constructing a national consciousness. High-brow magazines such as *Dominion Illustrated*, *Liberty*, and *Canadian Courier* as well as more popular Canada magazines such as *Maclean's* covered Canadian football. Early coverage served to increase the popularity of the game while teaching readers how to play or watch a game.¹⁰¹ *Maclean's* magazine was soon caught up in the debates surrounding the Americanization of Canadian football and the question of whether English rugby was superior to Canadian football.¹⁰² Canadian magazines could use football as national content, demonstrating once again the interaction between sport, media and the nation. In an attempt to reduce the amount of American magazines flowing north, the federal government enacted a tariff in 1930 resulting in a decline in circulation of American magazines by about 60 percent and an increase in the sale of Canadian magazines by 65 percent.¹⁰³

Although this was an important government intervention, it was not the first time the government had acted in the area of culture. A modest postal subsidy for newspapers, magazines and books had been established earlier and a Public Archives had been created. Governors General had not just donated sports trophies, they had supported the arts and letters. The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts had been started in 1880, and the

¹⁰¹ See for example R. Tait McKenzie, "Rugby Football in Canada," *Dominion Illustrated Monthly*, February, 1892, 11-9.

¹⁰² Henry Roxborough, "Rugger or Rugby?: an Analysis of the Two Rugby Football Games Battling for Supremacy in Canada," *Maclean's*, November 15, 1929, 17, 65-8; Ted Reeve, "They're at it again!," *Maclean's*, September 15, 1931, 12, 42.

¹⁰³ Graeme S. Mount and Edelgard E. Mahant, "The US Cultural Impact in Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2001), 452; John Herd Thompson and Stephen J. Randall, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 117; Vipond, *Mass Media*, 36-7.

National Gallery of Canada was established at about the same time. The Canadian Motion Picture Bureau and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board were created in 1916 and 1919 respectively. These were small uncoordinated measures but they demonstrated that there were situations in which state support of Canadian culture was deemed appropriate.¹⁰⁴

In his article lamenting Canada's situation as a "vassal state," MacMechan also turned his attention to the Americanization of Canadian sport. He complained that baseball, an American sport, had pushed aside the Canadian sport of lacrosse, and that newspapers were filled with coverage of sports from the United States. MacMechan's complaint indicates that some members of the elite in Canada at this time were concerned not only with high culture but also with popular cultural forms such as sport. The author hoped that the end of the Great War would provide Canada with a confident nationalism that would allow citizens to fight "to create a national spirit, a national character, a national unity."¹⁰⁵ He desired a more Canadian Canada.

Despite the saturation of American cultural content lamented by MacMechan and demonstrated by the magazine industry, Vipond regards the 1920s as a time when Canadian cultural nationalism flourished.¹⁰⁶ The Group of Seven painters emerged at this time, the Canadian Historical Association was formed and the influential journal

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 3, "'A Made desire to Bring About State Control': Government Patronage and the Arts," in Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) for a more complete examination of this topic.

¹⁰⁵ MacMechan, "Canada," 353.

¹⁰⁶ Vipond, "The Nationalist Network," 32.

Canadian Forum was established. The *Canadian Independence Magazine* declared in 1930 that “Canadians must become Canadians and nothing else.”¹⁰⁷

Sport was just another element of American popular culture that could be consumed by Canadians. As the sporting culture in Canada became increasingly inundated by imported sport from the United States, the ability of sport in Canada to contribute to a distinctive indigenous identity became compromised. However, the greater the impact of forces such as Americanization on communities, the more important indigenous symbols and traditions become to counter these forces. National or local sporting traditions could be anchors of meaning for a nation’s people and help resist Americanization.

Sport historians Stacy Lorenz and Alan Metcalfe suggest that this onslaught of American culture resulted in baseball growing in popularity so much that it became Canada’s true national sport.¹⁰⁸ According to historians S.F. Wise and Douglas Fisher, “mesmerized by baseball’s big league glamour, and spoon-fed by the American wire services, sports editors and reporters gave major coverage to baseball at the expense of lacrosse.”¹⁰⁹ Baseball in Canada originally had different rules than the American version and a Canadian professional baseball league existed for a brief time in the 1870s. Soon teams were dependent on American players and American competition. Most leagues

¹⁰⁷ Gordon M. Weir, “Our Creed,” *The Canadian Independence Magazine*, June 30, 1930, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Lorenz, “Bowling Down,” 23; Metcalfe, *Canada Learns*, 98.

¹⁰⁹ Wise and Fisher, *Canada’s Sporting Heroes*, 30.

developed north-south and American rules prevailed.¹¹⁰ By the 1880s most top teams in Canada were affiliated with American pro leagues. A Canadian baseball league never had a chance to develop. The Canadian magazine *Saturday Night* decried the Americanization of Canadian baseball in articles printed in 1908 and again in 1912.¹¹¹ American news and radio combined to make the World Series a national sporting event in Canada, as American symbols, stories, and ideas increasingly intruded into Canadian life. One writer in *The Canadian Forum* in 1927 pointed out that when Canadians “bowed down to Babe Ruth,” they demonstrated that Canada had been conquered by the “American Empire.”¹¹²

Even Canadian professional hockey was not immune to American influence. Prior to the 1920s, the National Hockey League was made up of only Canadian teams. In search of greater revenue, American teams were added and some teams based in smaller Canadian markets were moved to US locations. The press lamented that the good Canadian players would follow the money and smaller Canadian cities would lose the opportunity for a team.¹¹³ When the professional hockey league in western Canada collapsed in 1926, players from this league were used to supply the new American teams.¹¹⁴ After almost three decades of only Canadian teams playing for the Stanley Cup,

¹¹⁰ Don Morrow, “Baseball,” in *A Concise History of Sport in Canada*, ed. Don Morrow, Mary Keyes, Wayne Simpson, Frank Cosentino, and Ron Lappage (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1989), 121.

¹¹¹ Donald Dixit, “The Language of the Fan,” *Saturday Night*, May 16, 1908, 11; P.O.D., “Boosting Baseball,” *Saturday Night*, June 1, 1912, 6.

¹¹² Robert Ayre, “The American Empire,” *The Canadian Forum* 7, no. 76 (1927), 105.

¹¹³ See Kidd and Macfarlane, *The Death of Hockey*; Thompson and Randall, *Canada and the United States*, 119; Ross, *Joining the Clubs*, 58.

¹¹⁴ Kidd, *The Struggle*, 206.

by the end of the 1920s American teams had made their presence felt as the sport became a commercial spectacle.¹¹⁵

American popular culture drew Canadians into a continental popular culture, pulling Canada closer to its southern neighbour during the 1920s. Professional sports in Canada such as baseball and hockey mirrored much of Canadian culture in becoming Americanized. Administrators looked south for the possibility of lucrative payouts. Canadian football, with its different rules, resisted the pull of continentalization.

3.6 Postwar Canadian Football

During the 1920s organizers of Canadian football continually were faced with decisions regarding the nature of the game. Should it become like the American game, revert back to the traditional conservative English rugby game, or should organizers continue to develop a uniquely Canadian version of the game? In 1920, after losing a game to a team from McGill that was coached by an American, University of Toronto coach Harry “Reddy” Griffiths commented unfavourably on McGill’s play, labeling it “American” football, pleading that “the ‘Canadian’ game be played once more.”¹¹⁶

A lack of population, greater distances to travel and fewer teams led many western teams to play against American clubs. As a result some of these teams adopted an American style of play. In addition, many Americans were settling north of the border in Canada’s bid to populate the prairies and they brought with them their culture and their

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 213.

¹¹⁶ “Varsity Beaten in Toronto,” *The McGill News*, March 1920, 29.

sports. After the 1922 Grey Cup game, the Edmonton team, coached by American Deacon White, was criticized for employing American strategy.¹¹⁷ While there was resistance to the incorporation of American rules and tactics, it is clear that some teams were employing strategies that were popular in the American game.¹¹⁸ An interplay of resistance and accommodation to American influences shaped Canadian football. Resistance to the American game seemed to be heightened in times of peak nationalism, including after the War.

In 1924, American Frank Shaughnessy, coaching in Canada and an advocate for Canadian football, wrote “the Canadian game is so much more attractive in every way. It would be foolish to change our present style of open play to the slower and concealed style in vogue across the border.” He compared a Canadian game that featured 208 plays with an American game played on the same day that had only 108 plays to prove that the faster Canadian game was more exciting.¹¹⁹

The debate gained such momentum that the nationalist intelligentsia became involved. An editorial in the *McGill News* in 1925 criticized the Canadian game as too American and condemned further rule change proposals, arguing “adoption of these would render our game in all essentials indistinguishable from American football.” The article continued, “Canadian football has got into a bad way” and if it moves towards

¹¹⁷ Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years*, 74-5.

¹¹⁸ McGill’s use of American-style play is outlined in “College Football Comes to a Critical Position,” *Toronto Star*, November 17, 1913, 13.

¹¹⁹ Frank Shaughnessy, “Coaching and Canadian Rugby,” *Maclean’s*, November 1, 1924, 24.

American football “then the game will lose what is left of its distinctive Canadian identity.”¹²⁰

The editorial resulted in a score of letters, the majority of which argued in favour of a distinctive Canadian game. McGill University organized a symposium that brought together a number of the national elite to discuss Canadian football. Sir Robert Falconer, president of the University of Toronto, stated “something might be done under the impulse of loyalty to our own country and an appeal to our national sentiment.”¹²¹ The debate was not so much about football as it was about nationalism and independence. Discussion centered around which game would be the best choice. Some, including a former player and current Student Council President, felt that American football was superior. Other former players and students felt the British game was superior while still others favoured the Canadian game. “God forbid there should be one single vote for the [American game]” stated prominent business mogul, D.W. Ambridge. “I cannot for the life of me see why we in Canada cannot play football the way we want to play it, and develop a game as distinctly Canadian as English rugger is English.”¹²² The conclusion of the symposium was that Americanizing trends must be resisted and a superior, distinctive Canadian game that could engender loyalty and promote identity must be supported.

The choice of pursuing a Canadian game seemed to be widely acceptable, because Canadian football prospered. Canadian football drew larger crowds than any other sport.

¹²⁰ “A Plea for Better Football,” *The McGill News*, December 1925, 6.

¹²¹ “It’s A Game, Football,” *The McGill News*, March 1926, 10.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 11

By 1927 there were four Senior Leagues across the country with thirty teams vying for the Grey Cup. In addition, there were Intermediate and Junior leagues also pursuing Dominion Championships. At some games, more than 20,000 spectators were packing stadiums to watch the action. The popularity of Canadian football surpassed English rugby in the Maritimes and British Columbia, the two parts of Canada that clung to the traditional game.¹²³

An article in *The Canadian Magazine* in November of 1931 examined the Americanization of Canadian sport. The author suggested that, of the three sports that could be considered Canadian; hockey and lacrosse had joined baseball in becoming too American. In Canada, as in many other colonized nations, the development of sport had marginalized indigenous practices in favour of foreign ones. However, the organizers of Canadian football continued to battle against this process. Canadian football, despite some rule changes, had successfully been able to resist the American influence that had damaged other Canadian pastimes. With baseball, lacrosse and hockey Americanized, the author asked whether Canadian football could remain Canadian¹²⁴

The next Americanization challenge arose with the issue of adopting the forward pass. American teams had been using the forward pass since 1906 but Canadian organizers had stubbornly resisted the tactic. With the number of American coaches and American players in Canada, the pressure to embrace the American game and the forward

¹²³ David W. Brown, "The Rise and Fall of Rugby Football League in Nova Scotia, 1946-1956," *Sport History Review* 10, no. 2, (1979), 59; Daniel A. MacDonald. *Gridiron and Coal: The Making of Rugby Football in Industrial Cape Breton: 1900-1960*, (MA Thesis, St. Mary's University, 2001), 55.

¹²⁴ Leslie Roberts, "Americanizing Canadian Sport," *The Canadian Magazine*, November, 1931, 8, 41.

pass was growing, but there was also a great deal of resistance. As Stebbins wrote, “[f]or some devotees, the introduction of the forward pass represented still another instance of insidious Americanization of the Canadian game.”¹²⁵ It was the sports-writers who leapt to the defence of Canadian football. In an article in *Maclean's*, journalist and former football coach Ted Reeve implored the league to resist Americanization, as did former University of Toronto coach Harry Griffiths in the *Globe*, demanding administrators keep this a Canadian game.¹²⁶ With all the debate, Bill Rose wrote in *Maclean's*, we have “been reminded that this great national game must not be tainted with importations from abroad.” Canadian football “wants to be different, regardless of cost.”¹²⁷ Yet the pressure to accept the forward pass was overwhelming and eventually the play was adopted in Canada in 1931. The *Hamilton Herald* featured an editorial that reported that “the Canadian Rugby Football Union turned yankee and accepted the forward pass into the Canadian game”¹²⁸

The adoption of the forward pass showed that, while there was continuing pressure to Americanize the game, there was also continuing resistance based on a sense of tradition that was invoked to legitimize the sport as authentically Canadian. In an editorial on November 4, 1931, the *Toronto Globe* predicted the adoption of the forward

¹²⁵ Robert Stebbins. *Canadian Football: The View from the Helmet* (London, Ont.: Centre for Social and Humanistic Studies, University of Western Ontario, 1987), 9.

¹²⁶ Reeve, “They’re at it Again!”, “Forward-Pass Rule Scored by Griffiths,” *Toronto Globe*, November 3, 1931, 11.

¹²⁷ Bill Ross, “Well, the Crowd Likes it,” *Maclean's*, September 1931, 65.

¹²⁸ Cited in Frank Cosentino, “Football,” in *A Concise History of Sport in Canada*, ed. Don Morrow, et al., (Toronto: Oxford, 1989), 154.

pass would lead to an importation of American players and coaches, which Canadian football organizers were attempting to resist.¹²⁹ The swell of Americans crossing the border came so quickly that one football official advocated that they be barred from the Canadian game for two years to allow Canadians to learn how to incorporate the play.¹³⁰ That did not occur, and the new strategy brought with it a rapid Americanization of the Canadian game. American quarterbacks had been throwing forward passes for decades and thus had a distinct advantage over Canadian quarterbacks who were trying to learn the play. Similarly, American receivers were well versed in running patterns and catching passes, and American defenders were more experienced in trying to defend against the play. Even coaches from the US had an advantage in teaching players the new tactic. This one rule change resulted in experienced Americans being heavily recruited for Canadian teams. In 1932, a newspaper article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* facetiously reported that the Regina “Americans” were better than the Winnipeg “Americans.”¹³¹ The next year an editorial in the *Toronto Globe* accused Montreal and Ottawa of employing the forward pass because they couldn’t win playing the Canadian game. The article continued, “[h]ad the pass not been adopted and the United States players barred, the obnoxious conditions that exist at the present time, would not have been possible. . . Before long, there may be no more Canadian football. . . It is high time for a showdown.”¹³²

¹²⁹ Bert Perry, “Detours Through the Sport Maze,” *Toronto Globe*, November 4, 1931, 7.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³¹ Cited in Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years*, 97.

¹³² Michael J. Rodden, “On the Highways of Sport,” *Toronto Globe*, September 7, 1933, 12.

3.7 Radio

In the 1920s another technological advance in communications developed into a new mass medium. The new technology was radio, and just as the newspapers were greatly aided by the telegraph lines laid beside the railway, so too was this development facilitated by the railway. The first radio network in Canada was owned and operated by the Canadian National Railway.¹³³ Many newspapers owned radio stations, intricately linking the railway, the telegraph, newspapers, and the radio. Thus technological nationalism continued to help naturalize the nation.¹³⁴

As radio developed and spanned Canadian territory, its listenership increasingly approximated the people of the nation and the simultaneous shared experiences they provided helped further reinforce the idea of nation. In the same way that sport was a perfect fit for the newspaper, sport, in particular football, was soon a fixture on radio. The 1922 Grey Cup game was broadcast by an announcer in an Edmonton studio reading the play-by-play as it was received by telegraph from the stadium in Kingston.¹³⁵ Foster Hewitt called the 1926 Grey Cup on the *Toronto Star's* radio service and the play-by-play of the 1928 game was broadcast coast-to-coast.¹³⁶ Broadcasting the Canadian football

¹³³ Mary Vipond, *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 50-1, 258. Although there is disagreement about what constitutes a network and if this was actually in fact a true radio network.

¹³⁴ Charland, "Technological Nationalism."

¹³⁵ "Story of Rugby Final Saturday over Radio," *Edmonton Journal*, November 29, 1922, 1.

¹³⁶ Thanks to CFL historian Jack Morrow for providing this information. "CFCA's Rugby Game to-day," *Toronto Star*, December 4, 1926, 10; Januska, *Grey Cup Century*, 60.

championship nationally on the radio deepened the association between the sport and the nation.

Radio was another important cultural industry in which Americans dominated. The border did not prevent radio waves from crossing into Canadian homes. In 1924 *Maclean's* reported "nine-tenths of the radio fans in the Dominion hear three to four times as many US stations as Canadian."¹³⁷ By the end of the twenties, it was estimated that 80 percent of radio programs listened to in Canada were American. While virtually all Canadians could receive American radio stations, only 60 percent could hear a Canadian station.¹³⁸ A survey by the *Toronto Telegram* newspaper in 1925 found that the 17 favourite radio stations listened to in Toronto were all American.¹³⁹

The Diamond Jubilee celebration of 1927 was broadcast coast-to-coast on the CNR radio network. The broadcast demonstrated the way radio could contribute to commonality and increase levels of nationalism in the country.¹⁴⁰ Post-war nationalism, increasing Americanization, and the experience of the Diamond Jubilee combined to bring about the first major federal government action into culture when the Aird Royal

¹³⁷ Elton Johnson, "Canada's Radio Consciousness," *Maclean's*, October 1924, 53.

¹³⁸ Margaret Prang, "The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* XLVI, no. 1 (March 1965), 4.

¹³⁹ Ostry, *The Cultural Connection*, 44.

¹⁴⁰ Robert MacDougall, "The All-Red Dream: Technological Nationalism and the Trans-Canada Telephone System," in *Canadas of the Mind: The Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007), 53. Robert Cupido uses both Anderson's and Charland's theories to provide a different viewpoint to the efficacy of imagining through the media. He argues the radio broadcast served to divide Canadians as many working-class immigrants could not understand or even hear the broadcast. Robert Cupido, "The Medium, the Message, and the Modern: the Jubilee Broadcast of 1927," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 26 (Fall 2002), 101.

Commission on Radio Broadcasting was established in 1928 to respond to “the threat posed to Canadian sovereignty by the burgeoning radio empires of the United States.”¹⁴¹

By the 1930s, one-third of Canadian households owned a radio and Canadian football had become a fixture in the broadcasting line-up.¹⁴² In 1938, regular season games for all teams in the Big Four (Eastern Football Conference); Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton, were being broadcast on radio and in some cases fifteen-minute programs on the local football team were broadcast daily during the season.

The Aird Commission on Radio Broadcasting recommended the establishment of a publicly owned broadcasting system capable of linking Canadians from east to west to north while “fostering a national spirit and interpreting national citizenship.”¹⁴³ Radio was identified by the federal government as a force to unite and stabilize a country at a time when national identity and Americanization were concerns. Partially in response to pressure from another nationalist organization, the Canadian Radio League, the federal government formed the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) which in 1936 was reconstituted as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The CBC helped resist further absorption into the United States by distributing Canadian news, sports, entertainment and information programming. Beginning in 1936, for more than half-a-century, CBC radio broadcast the Grey Cup nationwide. It was another example of using communications to help Canadians think along an east-west axis.

¹⁴¹ Audley, *Canada's Cultural Industries*, 183.

¹⁴² Stacy Lorenz, “A Lively Interest on the Prairies: Western Canada, the Mass Media, and a ‘World of Sport:’ 1870-1939,” *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 2 (2000), 206, 208.

¹⁴³ Canada. *Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting* (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, Printer to the King, 1929), 9.

During the 1930s Canadian football continued to thrive despite the horrendous depression that gripped the country. Thousands of people still bought tickets and filled the stands to cheer on their home team. The clubs continued to make money and this profitability led to professionalism creeping into the amateur Canadian game. Teams started to recruit and pay mostly American players in an attempt to win football games, attract fans and challenge for the Grey Cup. University teams, at one time so dominant, dropped out of competition, complaining about the professionalism that had tainted the game. Money could now buy a competitive team.¹⁴⁴ A team in oil-rich Sarnia, located close to the American border, qualified for the playoffs 10 of its first 12 years, advancing to the Grey Cup three times during the '30s, and winning it twice. In 1935, Winnipeg general manager Joe Ryan, financed by a group of Winnipeg businessmen with the goal of boosting the city, hired seven American players to complement the two his team already had. That year the team became the first from the west to win the Grey Cup. The CRU quickly responded by implementing a residency rule and import restrictions designed to limit the number of Americans playing Canadian football. The next year, the western champion from Regina had a number of American players ruled ineligible and the team was prevented from competing in the Grey Cup game.¹⁴⁵

The arrival of American players was accompanied by the implementation of more American rules and strategies. Some restrictions on the forward pass and blocking were lifted. These rule changes advantaged American players more familiar with the tactics.

¹⁴⁴ Currie, *100 Years*, 94. The fact Canadian football had remained an amateur sport for so long endeared it even more to the masses and reinforced the community attachment to the game.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 97.

An article in the *McGill News* once again raised the alarm over these changes, arguing that there is a “feeling that further change will destroy the traditional character of the game and over-Americanize it.”¹⁴⁶ The author pleaded with Canadians to preserve that which made the Canadian game distinctive.

Hockey had accepted professionalism decades before football, which had retained some of its amateur ideals as well as its attachment to community.¹⁴⁷ In part, it was the acceptance of professionalism that resulted in the NHL’s American expansion in the 1920s. The reluctance to embrace professionalism may have helped Canadian football resist complete Americanization.

It should not be surprising that the Second World War interrupted the growth of Canadian football. Players went into the service and stadiums were taken over by the military. Teams withdrew from competition and leagues disbanded as attention turned to more important matters. However, Canadian football was not abandoned completely, as it had been during the First World War. The military decided to organize football across the country in an effort to boost morale, and military-based teams played games and competed for the Grey Cup during the War.¹⁴⁸ Two games played between Canadian and American troops in London, England attracted more than 80,000 fans just months before

¹⁴⁶ Ted Moorhouse, “Touchdown Torpor,” *McGill News* (Spring 1938), 39.

¹⁴⁷ M. Ann Hall, Trevor Slack, Garry Smith, and David Whitson, *Sport in Canadian Society* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 69, 121; Richard Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 120, 124.

¹⁴⁸ Stephen Drake, *Weird Facts about Canadian Football* (Montreal: Overtime Books, 2009), 26-7.

the D-Day invasion in 1944.¹⁴⁹ These morale-boosting exercises were the first examples of government intervention in football for nationalist reasons.

Government had little direct involvement with sport or Canadian football at this time. Federal or municipal governments often funded the building of multi-use stadiums but it was usually boosters who paid the transportation costs, and money to pay players was usually covered by ticket sales. Provincial governments played no role in supporting or promoting Canadian football.

The creation of a national public broadcaster was the first major example of government intervention to counter market forces for reasons of cultural sovereignty. During the war the CBC proved its value by reporting on events overseas and coordinating efforts on the home-front. The National Film Board, formed in 1939, was used to mobilize the medium of film during the war effort. Precedent had now been established for the federal government to intervene in the area of culture. At first, the strategy of cultural independence had been established through transportation and communication technologies such as canals, railways, and the telegraph. Now it was extended to the media of magazines, film, and radio. There was as yet, however, no intervention to protect media content. The war experience demonstrated the contribution to be made in the national interest by the national media. The war had served as dramatic

¹⁴⁹ A film archive of an interview with Canadian captain Denny Whitaker is available on CBC.ca. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/tea-bowl-football-game-rallied-canadian-troops-ahead-of-d-day-1.2423115>. See also Canadian Army Newsreels, No. 26 and No. 28, 1944 available on-line courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENBT87NhK_c, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W79U7Eu_fo.

media content. What would replace this content post-war? Sport, according to Hobsbawm, a “gladiatorial contest” like war, was one possibility.¹⁵⁰

3.8 Post Second World War Canada

Author George Woodcock claimed that World War II “increased the Canadian sense of existing as a separate nation, finally detached from the old imperial links with Britain and anxious to defend itself from being absorbed into a continental culture in North America.”¹⁵¹ Post-War prosperity would lead Canadians into a consumer society with more leisure time, and after years of sacrifice Canadians wanted to enjoy this affluence. Professional sport benefited with hockey and football receiving increased interest from both the media and fans. After the Depression and the Second World War, politicians, economists, and Canadian citizens agreed that the federal government should be more involved in managing the economy. Canada became one of the first countries to adopt Keynesian economic policies based on the idea that governments should play a greater role in stabilizing the economy.¹⁵² This interventionist ideology would soon spread.

In 1938 the *Purvis Report* from the National Employment Commission recommended unemployment insurance, job training, and Keynesian economic principles. The *Purvis Report* was followed by the Rowell-Sirois Commission of 1940

¹⁵⁰ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 142; Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 123-4.

¹⁵¹ George Woodcock, *Northern Spring: The Flowering of Canadian Literature* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987), 12.

¹⁵² Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 43.

advocating a strengthened federal government including unemployment insurance and equalization payments. In 1942 the government formed the Turgeon Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment to plan for Canada's post-war transition to peace time. Artists lobbied the committee to pressure the federal government to sponsor more cultural activity across the country. Although their requests were ignored, this demonstrated that government intervention into culture was perhaps now more acceptable than it had been in the past. The 1943 *Report on Social Security for Canada* outlined the need for more comprehensive, universal social programs and welfare services. Together these reports laid the foundations for the establishment of the post-war Canadian welfare state. Ultimately the federal government was involved in unemployment insurance (1940), family allowance (1945), mortgage-lending programs (1946), old age pensions (1952), equalization payments (1957), and national health insurance (1957).¹⁵³ These initiatives helped move the government away from the traditional laissez faire approach of governing that existed in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada.

Keynesian principles, contentious prior to the war, were now the conventional wisdom among policy makers. Vance argues that one of the most significant legacies of the Second World War in Canada was the transition to big government. Between 1939 and 1945 the number of civil servants in Ottawa doubled.¹⁵⁴ Taxation increased during the war, giving the federal government more money to spend. As the state directed the

¹⁵³ J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), 276, 278; Alvin Finkel, "Origins of the Welfare State in Canada," in *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power*, ed. Leo Panitch (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 361.

¹⁵⁴ Jonathan Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2009), 334.

war effort, the public grew more accustomed to government intervention. Bruce Doern refers to this as the era of a “Second National Policy.”¹⁵⁵

At the same time the government took steps to distance Canada from its British past and assert its national autonomy. In 1947 the Citizenship Act created a Canadian citizenship to replace the British citizenship Canadians acquired being part of the British Empire. In 1949 the Supreme Court of Canada replaced the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council at Westminster as the highest court of appeal for Canadian cases. In 1952 the first Canadian-born Governor General was appointed. Polls showed that Canadians wanted an official anthem, and discussions around a national flag started.¹⁵⁶ That these powerful symbols were being considered by Canadians is testament to the rise of an autonomist nationalism in the postwar period. The challenge was whether Canadian identity could be made less British without becoming more American.

The Grey Cup game continued to grow in popularity, attracting attention as a truly national event. In 1946, Jim Coleman from the *Globe and Mail* labeled it “The BIG Canadian sporting event of the year,” claiming that, even if the stadium could seat 50,000, it would still not be big enough.¹⁵⁷ In subsequent years the game began to draw more media attention and more cities would form teams.

The new post-war nationalism was perhaps best exemplified by a series of events that occurred in 1948. The government of Prime Minister Mackenzie King had negotiated

¹⁵⁵ Bruce Doern, *Canadian Public Policy: Ideas, Structure, Process* (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1992), 137-8.

¹⁵⁶ Blair Fraser, *The Search for Identity* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1967), 234-47.

¹⁵⁷ Jim Coleman, “Score one for the Cowboys,” *Globe and Mail*, November 29, 1946, 18.

a reciprocity deal with the US but at the last minute, worried about a nationalist backlash, the government backed out of the agreement.¹⁵⁸ Canadians were not quite prepared to cozy up to the United States. In November, Prime Minister St. Laurent asked Vincent Massey to head up the federal government's most important federal examination of the cultural sector, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. Earlier that year, Massey had published *On Being Canadian*, warning Canadians of the growing American influence. Massey emphasised the distinctiveness of being Canadian, and was critical of the state for not doing enough to nurture a Canadian culture.¹⁵⁹

The same month Massey was approached to head up the commission, fans of the Calgary Stampeders transformed the Grey Cup football game into a celebration of national unity and identity. The 1948 Grey Cup game was a populist example of postwar nationalism. Hundreds of Calgarians boarded trains and airplanes and stampeded conservative Toronto in support of their team. They transported chuckwagons and horses, and even recruited indigenous people in traditional dress to celebrate the game and the country. As they travelled east across the country by train, they stopped in cities along the way, holding impromptu square dances and capturing the attention of the media. As their train pulled into Toronto's Union Station just as the work day was to begin, a square dance broke out. The revelry resulted in a parade in downtown Toronto the next day, with

¹⁵⁸ J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, *For Better or For Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991), 174.

¹⁵⁹ Vincent Massey, *On Being Canadian* (London: J. M. Dent Publishing), 48.

Toronto mayor Hiram MacCallum riding down Bay Street on a horse. After his equestrian event, the mayor then joined in the outdoor pancake breakfast.¹⁶⁰

What for almost half a century had been a symbolically important meeting between two football teams was reinvented for the postwar era as a national celebration complete with parades, parties, horses in hotel lobbies, and other festivities. Annual celebrations stress continuity with the past and help sustain the nation by reminding citizens of the shared cultural bonds and political kinship. The Grey Cup was elevated into a national spectacle. The surface narrative of regional rivalry was all in good fun; the subtext was a kinship through shared love of the game that reinforced the nation.

The 1948 Grey Cup celebration demonstrated the exuberance of post-War nationalism and just how passionate Canadians were about Canadian football. When the party was over, the west had defeated the east, symbolically announcing its new prominence on the national stage. Award-winning CBC radio personality John Fisher, dubbed “Mr. Canada,” devoted a segment of his national report to the 1948 game. Fisher expressed his admiration for a group of Canadians who were interested in celebrating something distinctively Canadian.¹⁶¹ The next year a line from the 1949 Grey Cup program boasted “[l]ast year’s football classic did more to cement specific Canadian nationalism than all the politicians and all their speeches since Confederation.”¹⁶² In

¹⁶⁰ CBC Radio, John Fisher, “A Mighty Fine Brand,” *John Fisher Reports*, November 28, 1948. The script is in the personal collection of the Merkosky Family, Edmonton.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Grey Cup Program, 1949, 30. Author’s personal collection.

subsequent years the game began to draw more media attention and the league increased in size.

Just as the Grey Cup could contribute to nation-building, the Massey Commission sought to display culture to sustain Canadian nationhood. In an effort to combat the popular culture spilling northward from the United States, the commission advocated a state-sponsored strategy for Canadian cultural development. Canadians consumed more foreign culture than almost any other nation in the world. The Massey Commission advocated more government intervention into culture to combat this trend.

When he announced the formation of the Massey Commission, the Prime Minister spoke of hockey and world champion figure skater Barbara Ann Scott, using sport and its role in creating commonality and identity to justify the formation of the Royal Commission. However, the culture that the Massey Commission supported would not include sport. The Commission advocated using high culture to create a national identity. While the popularity of the 1948 Grey Cup demonstrated the importance of popular culture and its ability to contribute to Canadian identity and unity, the Massey Commission ignored these cultural forms. The Commission's oversight allowed foreign popular culture to continue to infiltrate Canada unimpeded.

Canadian culture would require state support to counteract the market forces which tilted the playing field in favour of American cultural products and made the creation of a Canadian national culture an uphill battle. The nationalism that emerged after the Second World War provided the federal government with greater support to engage in nation-building. Coupled with the acceptance of increased federal government intervention, the

state was now more likely than ever before to play a role in promoting, protecting and producing Canadian culture.

3.9 Conclusion

From its earliest days, Canadian football was a nationalist concern. A sense of a distinctly Canadian pastime led its early promoters and players to differentiate it from first, British rugby, and then American football by developing and defending distinctive rules for the game. The critical rules differentiation came from a pursuit of national distinctiveness. Canadian nationalism helped stimulate the growth of Canadian football, resulting in a sport that became a distinctive marker of Canadian identity and helped verify the existence of the nation. It then became a symbolic means by which the country could distance itself from colonial Great Britain and then resist assimilation by the United States.

The telegraph, railway, newspaper and radio helped overcome the barrier of geography and connect the country, fostering national identity. In this Andersonian way the nation as a community of people, most of whom would never know or meet one another, could still have common experiences. Canadian football expanded within the territory as the state bound it spatially with transportation and communication networks and their regulation. Those same networks provided channels for the circulation of nationalist discourse which legitimized the state's sovereignty over this territory.

As a popular pastime, football seemed to naturalize the nation. The railway, newspapers, magazines, and radio helped create these bonds. With each new technology Canadian football occupied the Canadian territory more fully. The development of space-

binding technologies that transcended regionalism permitted the development of a national sporting community.

As the Canadian media allowed consolidation of the national territory, it also breached the national boundary by supplying foreign content. However, the border was a part of national consciousness, so one counterintuitive effect of this technological invasion was to make Canadians more nationalist. As nationalism increased, Canadians became more defensive and protective of their culture in face of the perceived external threat. This feeling extended to Canadian football.

This chapter has integrated the early history of Canadian football with technological nationalism, government intervention, and cultural policy. It shows how football as one form of sport, itself a form of popular culture, developed through symbiotic interaction with these other developments. As Canadian football grew to encompass the country, it became synonymous with the nation as the game shared the same past and occupied the same territory. Canadian football became a unifying thread of national experience. With its distinctive rules it did not breach the national boundary as other sports leagues did. Nationalism made football different and football in turn made the nation different. Football developed historically in conjunction with the nation, acquiring in the process a distinctive identity and a territorial configuration that made it exemplarily Canadian.

By the postwar era the Laurentian Thesis had become a widely accepted interpretation of Canada's history. The organizational structure of Canadian football reinforced the east-west axis. Team and regional rivalries became a staple of print and radio news and commentary, integrating football into national discourse. The media

allowed a simultaneous shared experience across the country, helping turn Canadian football into an agent of national unity. Canadian football became part of the complex of identity markers that nationalist intellectuals used to define Canada and differentiate it from other nations, one deemed all the more authentic for its roots in popular culture.

The association between football and nation was long standing. Other indigenous sports such as lacrosse and hockey, potentially much more representative of the Canadian myths of rugged northernness, were subsumed by American culture and therefore were less effective in contributing to Canada's uniqueness. Through its rules, history of resistance and league structure, Canadian football reinforced the idea of nation better than any other sport. As American commerce, culture and sport increasingly influenced Canada, symbols of Canadianness became even more important. Canadian football stubbornly resisted much of the American influence, ensuring that it could reinforce the idea of a distinct national identity.

Tracing the development of Canadian football demonstrates the way the game evolved to represent the nation. The game's representational nature is crucial to understanding why the government would eventually act to protect Canadian football. Moving into the postwar period, sport became more important to the media as popular content. Conditions in Canada were changing, becoming more favourable for government intervention generally, and more specifically, for intervention into the area of culture. At this point, the culture it supported did not include sport, but as the definition of culture broadened this would soon change.

Chapter 4: Occupying the Territory: 1950—1967

As the last chapter demonstrated, technology helped Canadian football spread across the land and nationalism stubbornly ensured that rules for Canadian football would differentiate it from other games. This in turn would help differentiate Canada from other nations. Through difference there was identity. Canadian football had evolved to become a distinct Canadian identity marker, helping to prove the existence of the Canadian nation. Leagues covered the country and the championship, the Grey Cup, evolved into a national spectacle that reinforced the idea of nation. This chapter covers the first moment when the Canadian government became directly involved in Canadian football. During the 1950s another new mass medium, television, arrived in Canada. Government intervention occurred when business interests threatened to deprive Canadians of the opportunity to view the Grey Cup game on television in 1962. The federal government forced the public broadcaster to televise the game because doing so was deemed to be in the national interest.

The government had been involved in culture through its support for a national public radio broadcaster since 1932. Following the recommendations of the Massey Commission, the government gave the CBC responsibility for the new medium of television as well. The CBC began television broadcasting in 1952 and worked throughout the decade to build a national public television network.

In addition to its news and public affairs programming, the CBC, when not broadcasting American programs, was expected to enlighten its audience with its cultural programming. In the late 1950s the Diefenbaker Conservatives authorized a new private television network to compete with the CBC. This made it more difficult for the CBC to

pursue its highbrow mandate while pursuing ratings. At the same time, cultural egalitarianism was gaining legitimacy among decision makers. It became more democratic to accept and celebrate popular culture than try to wean people off it. From a nationalist perspective, popular culture that was Canadian in origin was attractive because it was the authentic culture of the people.

In the 1950s the popularity of Canadian football was reinforced by the new medium of television. Television helped Canadian football to grow, but it also introduced American football to the country. The federal government continued to intervene in many aspects of Canadian society, including culture, and increasingly not only high culture, but also areas of popular culture such as sport. The arrival of television made the Grey Cup spectacle even more powerful and soon politicians began to use the game for political purposes. Starting with Louis St. Laurent and extending over the next four decades, Prime Ministers publically pledged support for the game, on occasion performed the ceremonial kick-off or coin-toss, and even presented the trophy itself.

Despite the influence of American culture, organizers of Canadian football continued to try to retain the game's differences. In 1949, John Edwards from Queen's University completed a graduate thesis that included a survey of football experts on both sides of the border. Two years earlier Edwards had authored the first book on Canadian football. In his book he proposed that Canadian football was "part of becoming a good citizen and Canadian!"¹ In his graduate research, he concluded that Canadian football was superior to the American game and therefore the Canadian rules should be left alone

¹ Johnny (Jake) Edwards, *Canadian Football* (Toronto: Copp Clark Co. Ltd., 1947), 3.

with the exception of adding one American rule regarding blocking on punt returns. Furthermore, he recommended the rules governing American football should be changed to mirror the better Canadian game.²

Prior to the Second World War, in an effort to appear to be more professional and less provincial, teams were allowed to sign five American players. The Toronto Argonauts refused, won the Grey Cup in 1945, '46 and '47 with Canadian players and a Canadian coach, and were applauded for doing so.³ Canadian football continued to expand to cover most of the country. During the war, teams organized at military bases in Nova Scotia played primarily against university teams. As a result, junior football leagues were organized in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia but a lack of population prevented cities from organizing teams to compete for the Grey Cup. A new team in Montreal was formed in 1946 called the Alouettes, a French name intended to appeal to the francophone public. A club representing Edmonton was re-formed in 1949, and then one was established in Vancouver in 1954. In an increasingly urban country, more than one-quarter of Canadians now lived in a city with a team in pursuit of the Grey Cup, with many more in the regions surrounding these cities identifying with their teams. Canadian football became more professional when the amateur teams making up the Ontario Rugby Football Union withdrew from Grey Cup competition in 1955.

Air travel began to be commonly used for transporting football teams across the country and allowed the Grey Cup to be played in Vancouver in 1955, making the game

² Toronto-Ottawa football program. "Standardizing of Grid Rules Studied by Football Experts," 1949, 6-7. Author's personal collection.

³ Cited in MacDonald, *Gridiron and Coal*, 81. The reference is from the *Sydney Post -Record*, September 30 1946; Januska, *Grey Cup Century*, 90.

still more of a national affair. Three years later, at the next Grey Cup game in Vancouver, fifty-one special flights were booked and more than a dozen trains added to help bring tens of thousands of spectators to the event.⁴

During the 1950s, four teams moved into new, larger stadiums, while the five other teams all expanded seating capacity, with three stadiums nearly doubling in size to accommodate demand. Professional football in Canada was now a major spectator sport. Canadian-based teams were wealthy enough to sign several top American players who had previously been earning a living in the NFL, and attracted top US college talent with the promise of higher pay.⁵ Frank Tripucka, Bernie Faloney, Johnny Bright and Heisman trophy winner Billy Vessels were just a few of the players who shocked followers of the NFL by signing to play in a foreign country for more money. This was a time of great affluence in Canadian football.

While many class divisions in sport had been reduced, professional sport was still predominantly restricted to male members of the dominant white Euro-Canadian culture. However, changes in Canadian football reflected broader social change taking place in Canada. Jackie Robinson became the first black to play professional baseball, breaking the barrier with the Montreal Royals. He was welcomed by the Montreal community and this led to the Montreal Alouette football team signing Herb Trawick, the first black to play professional football since before the Depression. “Indian” Jack Jacobs quarterbacked the Winnipeg Blue Bombers to the Grey Cup game and the Edmonton Eskimos won three Grey Cups employing a “United Nations” backfield made up of

⁴ Cosentino, *The Grey Cup*, 161.

⁵ Booton Herndon, “Young Man, Go North!” *Sports Illustrated*, October 26, 1959, 84-94.

African-American players Johnnie Bright and Rollie Miles, accompanied by Asian-Canadian Normie Kwong and Jackie Parker from the American South. A willingness to welcome minority players in greater numbers and at important positions such as quarterback encouraged Canadians to use football to imagine Canada as a racially progressive country.⁶

By this time, North American professional sport had become a powerful form of popular culture. Most leagues had developed on an overtly commercial basis. Canadian professional football was different. Although it had also grown into a successful part of the Canadian entertainment industry, seven of the nine teams in the Canadian Football League were community-owned. As such these teams were more about local pride and identity than profit-seeking. Each team was allowed to sign local players through the territorial draft exemption.⁷ This further enhanced the feelings of attachment citizens had with the team. In many CFL cities the idea of the team being a commercial franchise was anathema to fans, teams and the league. Later, when some of the teams became privately-owned, ownership, in some cases, was still viewed as an act of community service.⁸ The

⁶ See John Valentine and Simon Darnell, "Football and 'Tolerance': Black Football Players in 20th Century Canada," in *Race and Sport in Canada Intersecting Inequalities*, ed. Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell and Yuka Nakamura (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2012).

⁷ The Territorial Draft Exemption was discontinued in 1985.

⁸ Up until 1989 the majority of the teams were community-owned. Sam Berger owned a portion of the Ottawa team until 1968 and then the Montreal franchise. His view was that ownership was "a civic service, a *national* service." He made no money in Ottawa and lost millions in Montreal. See Earl McRae, "Let Us Now Praise Sam Berger," *Canadian Magazine*, November 26, 1977, 12, 17. Harold Ballard saved the Hamilton team from bankruptcy and lost a reported \$20 million in 10 years starting in 1978. See Drake, *Weird Facts*, 55. The Hamilton Tiger-Cats are presently owned by Bob Young who refers to himself as a caretaker, taking care of the team for the community, rather than an owner. He has lost an estimated \$40 million. See Terry Jones, "The Caretaker," *Edmonton Sun*, November 22, 2013, S8. Bob Wetenhall, owner of the Montreal Alouettes for almost two decades, has lost money most years and views ownership as a trust. See Herb Zurkowsky, "Wetenhall to be Inducted into CFL Hall of Fame," *Montreal Gazette*, August

arrival of television had the potential to help Canadian teams improve their profitability as well as drastically change the relationship the Canadian football fan had with the game.

4.1 Technological Nationalism: Television

Broadcasting continued to be an important cultural tool used to forge national unity during the 1950s. On the first Canadian television broadcast, Prime Minister St. Laurent said television “should foster new interests in many aspects of Canadian life, and so help build mutual understanding within the nation.”⁹ Television in Canada, like radio, was placed under the responsibility of the CBC. By the time the first Canadian television stations opened in Montreal and Toronto in 1952, 100,000 Canadians already owned television sets and were accustomed to watching American shows.¹⁰ However, within a year there were eight stations in cities across the country. Just two years after the first Canadian telecasts, three-quarters of Canadians had access to television.¹¹ Scherer and Whitson point out that one of the “promises” of television was free access to popular entertainment and coverage of national events that could be used to create

22, 2015, E3. A group of local business owners bought the Calgary Stampeders not for “a great return on the dollar” but for the good of the city. See Frank Cosentino, *Home Again*, 126.

⁹ Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture*, 405.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 407.

¹¹ Frank Peers, *The Public Eye: Television and the Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1952-1968* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 3.

commonality.¹² Just as the state had placed a great deal of emphasis on radio and its potential for nation-building, television was seen as a powerful yet dangerous medium that could help construct the nation or serve as a potential Trojan horse for Americanization.¹³

Television fit in well with the new Canadian consumer society, providing entertainment and a new powerful medium for advertisers to reach a mass audience. The arrival of television changed the leisure time and media consumption of Canadians. Television became the most powerful medium of popular culture and sport was its most important content. Sport was perfect for television as it was highly visual, easy to understand, exciting, suspenseful, unscripted and unpredictable. It provided spontaneity, action, drama, and identity. "Football, because it was an action game, an acting out of war, with form -- violent, competitive, full of strategy, marked with surprise, was the consummate television show," observed one critic.¹⁴

Canadian football was prominently featured on Canadian television from the beginning of domestic broadcasting. The 1952 Grey Cup game was one of the first major events to be aired on television, just months after television broadcasting in Canada commenced. Although it could only be seen in the Toronto area, it attracted seven

¹² Jay Scherer and David Whitson, "Public Broadcasting, Sport, and Cultural Citizenship: The Future of Sport on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation?" *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 44 (2009), 223.

¹³ Paul Attallah, "A Usable History for the Study of Television," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 37, no. 3, (2007), 345.

¹⁴ Les Brown, *Television: The Business Behind the Box* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 303. Marshal McLuhan surmised that the drop in the popularity of baseball, and the increase in interest in football was due to television. Football's communal nature, and faster more aggressive action was more suited to television's zoom lenses, slow motion and instant replays. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 260.

hundred thousand viewers to become the most watched show in Canada's short television history.¹⁵ Television dramatically increased the popularity of football in Canada and expanded the audience, and thus, support for the game. It also supplied much needed revenue.

Through the medium of television, football became a spectacle and a ritual. The Grey Cup in particular marked a specific time in the annual calendar and became a ritualized activity and national spectacle. National celebrations are important in the construction of a national community. Hayes refers to these important rituals as "collective historic experiences."¹⁶ The game was soon constructed by the media to play an important role in contributing to a collective experience, uniting Canadians as they celebrated in the company of others. Football games also became ritualized practices, a routinized part of collective life. Following a team and discussing the most recent game became a part of day-to-day life. As a mass-mediated ritual, the game linked people to their national community and united them across boundaries of gender, class, ethnicity, and race.¹⁷

In 1954, ninety-two television stations and seventy-five radio stations across North America broadcast the Grey Cup game, giving it the highest radio and television coverage of any Canadian sporting event ever. Estimates were that 80 percent of the almost one million television sets in Canada were tuned in to the game, producing the

¹⁵ Paul Patskou, *CFL-The Television Years*, (Canadian Communications Foundation, August, 2007), broadcasting-history.ca.

¹⁶ Hayes, "America's National Pastime," 162.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

largest TV audience in Canadian history.¹⁸ Prime Minister St. Laurent delivered the pre-game message and spoke of the importance of the Grey Cup for national unity.

Television stations extended broadcasting hours to show the game. More than a thousand Manitobans flocked across the border to North Dakota, driving through six inches of snow to watch the game live because it was unavailable in Manitoba.¹⁹ After the game, Air Force jets were to fly films of the game for immediate broadcast in Edmonton and Winnipeg, while other cities across the country in virtually every province also received film to be shown the next day.²⁰

CBC President Davidson Dunton characterized the Grey Cup as “a lovely manifestation” of Canadian culture and perhaps the greatest unifying force in Canada.²¹ In 1955 Canadian professional football proved to be so attractive that CBC bumped its National Film Board Sunday afternoon film presentation to show the games.²² This was an example of popular culture pushing aside high-brow culture. Broadcasting a game allowed for commonality of experience. Millions of Canadians watched the same event at the same time.²³

¹⁸ Bernard Dufrense, “TV, radio coverage tops in grid classic,” *Ottawa Citizen*, November 29, 1954, 20.

¹⁹ Canadian Press, “Football Boom Day in Fargo,” *Ottawa Citizen*, November 29, 1954, 20.

²⁰ Dufrense, “TV, radio coverage,” 20; Canadian Press, “’54 Grey Cup Game to Be Well Covered,” *Calgary Herald*, November 24, 1954, 32.

²¹ “The Grey Cup Hassle,” *Time*, November 30, 1962, 11.

²² Gary Evans, *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 41.

²³ For the 1955 and 1956 Grey Cup games, the CBC used the US microwave relay to broadcast the game to millions of Canadians. By 1957 the Canadian relay network was complete. See Patskou, *CFL-The Television Years*.

A 1956 Gallup poll demonstrated the public awareness of the game. Only four years after it was first aired on television, more than 95 percent of those surveyed knew that the Grey Cup was awarded for football.²⁴ The 1957 Grey Cup Game attracted 97 percent of all television sets that were turned on in the country with an estimated four-and-a-half to five million viewers at a time when the national population was sixteen-and-a-half -million.²⁵

Football even challenged hockey for television audience size. In 1959, only the final game of the Stanley Cup playoffs, featuring the two Canadian teams, the defending champion Montreal Canadiens and the Toronto Maple Leafs, had a larger television audience than the Grey Cup game, which had an audience of almost 5 million or one-quarter of the Canadian population.²⁶ The average regular season football game drew more than two million viewers that year.²⁷ By the close of the decade, NHL hockey and CFL football were the two most valuable Canadian television broadcast commodities and dominated the ratings.²⁸ Television created an appetite for sport and increased the value placed on sport in Canadian society.

²⁴ Canadian Gallup Poll, #251, September 1956. Accessed January 11, 2016. <http://odesi1.scholarsportal.info/webview/index/en/Odesi/>

²⁵ Sandy Stewart, *Here's Looking at Us: A Personal History of Television in Canada*. (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1986), 196; Macintosh, Bidecki, Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 14.

²⁶ Peers, 1979, 237; CBC Annual Report, 1959-60, 17.

²⁷ Peers, 1979, 237.

²⁸ Richard P. Cavanagh, "The Development of Canadian Sports Broadcasting 1920-78," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 17, no. 3 (March 1992), 310.

CFL football made for such popular television content that games were picked up by American networks as early as 1954.²⁹ In 1959, the NFL made several requests to the CBC to begin televising NFL games, but a letter from Sports Director J.C. McCabe, made it clear that it was more important for the CBC to show CFL games.³⁰ The CBC was unwilling to devote even thirty minutes to NFL highlights.

Canadian football, aided by advances in television, inhabited the nation's imagined space, providing it with Canadian content. Charland questioned whether technology was sufficient for constructing a nation, but clearly here was the type of content that could help technological nationalism succeed.³¹

However, just as technology has the ability to contribute to nation building, it can also distribute foreign content and, as with other Canadian media, American content was dominant on Canadian televisions. In 1956 almost half of English programming shown on televisions in Canada originated from the US.³² A 1960 report revealed that almost 80 percent of English viewing time in border cities like Toronto was devoted to American content. This situation was not restricted to viewers along the border, as two-thirds of what Edmontonians consumed was also American programming.³³ While the state and

²⁹ Stewart, *Here's Looking at Us*, 195.

³⁰ Library and Archives Canada, Programming – Sports Broadcast – Football – Rights, RG41-A-IV-2-c, Vol. 222, File Pt. 1, 11-22-5 (pt 8), 1959, personal CBC memo dated and marked secret from J.C. McCabe, CBC Sports Director, dated Aug 26, 1959.

³¹ Charland, "Technological Nationalism."

³² J.M. Bumsted, "Canada and American Culture in the 1950s," in *Interpreting Canada's Past*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), 405.

³³ Ibid.

nationalistic organizations had worked to create a sense of Canadianness, consumers still seemed to want mostly American mass media content. Cultural theorist Marshall McLuhan warned that American culture had become so engrained in the lives of Canadians that it was not recognized as a form of cultural domination.³⁴ Perhaps confirming McLuhan's theory, despite the aforementioned rates of consumption, a 1956 poll found that only 27 percent of Canadians said that they were influenced too much by the United States.³⁵ In response to the increased Americanization of culture, the government had bolstered its cultural institutions and established the Canada Council, an arts funding body. Government intervention in the area of culture was expanding.

The Massey Commission had recommended that television policy be examined again after it had been operating for a few years. As a result, the Royal Commission on Broadcasting was organized. The 1957 report suggested that without state intervention the Canadian nation would not exist. The report emphasized the "need for a broadcasting system to help establish a Canadian cultural identity, particularly in the face of American encroachments." Furthermore, the report stated:

No other country is similarly helped and embarrassed by the close proximity of the United States... [A]s a nation we cannot accept, in these powerful and persuasive media, the natural and complete flow of another's culture without danger to our

³⁴ Gwyn, *The 49th Paradox*, 141.

³⁵ Lawrence Martin, *Pledge of Allegiance: the Americanization of Canada in the Mulroney Years* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), 196.

national identity. Can we resist the tidal wave of American cultural activity? Can we retain a Canadian identity, art and culture—a Canadian nationhood?³⁶

As a result of the report, the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG) was formed in 1958 to take over the CBC's role as regulator of the Canadian broadcasting system. One of the mandates of the BBG was to consider applications from potential private broadcasters. The Conservative government was supportive of competition in the television marketplace.³⁷

In 1959, the BBG established Canadian content regulations for television. Surveys demonstrated that the majority of Canadians supported Canadian content regulations and felt that broadcasting was important to identity, unity and self-expression. However, Dr. Andrew Stewart, Chair of the BBG, stated “[a]t times . . . Canadians lend their support to Canadian content; at other times, as audiences, they cast their votes against it.”³⁸ The ambivalent nature of Canadians led them to strongly support the production of and access to Canadian content, yet hungrily consume American content.

The Canadian government was not always consistent in its efforts to help Canadian culture survive. For example, when Canadian content regulations were passed for television in 1959, they included baseball's World Series and the State of the Union address made by the President of the United States as programs that are of “general

³⁶ Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on Broadcasting* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957), 8.

³⁷ Andrew Stewart and William H.N. Hull, *Canadian Television Policy and the Board of Broadcast Governors, 1958-1968* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1994), 20.

³⁸ Ibid.

interest to Canadians.” This allowed Canadian broadcasters, including the CBC, to air this popular revenue-producing content as Canadian.³⁹

4.2 Canadian Nationalism in the 1950s

Canadian children of the 1950s grew up exposed to more American culture than any previous generation.⁴⁰ Perhaps it is not surprising that, with the inordinate amount of exposure to American culture, Canadian nationalism became associated with fears of loss of sovereignty, resistance to cultural and economic imperialism, and anti-Americanism.⁴¹ The ambivalent nature of Canadians was evident in the demand on the one hand for American culture and on the other hand the anti-American sentiment that accompanied that demand. The post-war nation-building process, which Edwardson described as a “post-colonial offensive,” was active on many fronts.⁴²

However, promoting culture for nation building was a struggle. American periodicals had 67 percent of the Canadian market in 1948, and 80 percent by 1954. Two American publications, *Time* and *Reader’s Digest*, had more than one-third of all Canadian magazine advertising.⁴³ Only fourteen books of Canadian fiction were

³⁹ Collins, *Culture, Communication*, 74.

⁴⁰ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 92.

⁴¹ See Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, Chapter 3.

⁴² Ryan Edwardson, “Kicking Uncle Sam out of the Peaceable Kingdom: English-Canadian ‘New Nationalism’ and Americanization,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2002-2003), 136.

⁴³ Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 100.

published in 1948 and just six Canadian works of non-fiction.⁴⁴ That total represented approximately 1 percent of what was published in the US or the UK.⁴⁵ Nationalists were frustrated by the task of defining a Canada that was so inundated by American culture.⁴⁶

A parallel economic nationalism emerged as Canadians slowly began to realize the extent that their domestic industry was foreign, namely American, controlled. In 1956, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics reported on the level of this foreign ownership. More than 60 percent of the oil and gas industry, the majority of the mining industry, and almost half of the manufacturing sector was controlled by foreign (mostly American) firms.⁴⁷ Foreign ownership became a more prevalent political issue in 1957 when The Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects, chaired by Walter Gordon, reported that 40 percent of Canada's economy was foreign-owned.⁴⁸ The Report stated "No other nation as highly industrialized as Canada has such a large proportion of industry controlled by non-resident concerns."⁴⁹

Gordon became the voice of English-Canadian economic nationalism. He became finance minister in Prime Minister Lester Pearson's Cabinet in the 1960s, published *A Choice for Canada: Independent or Colonial Status* in 1966, and created and chaired the

⁴⁴ Ostry, *The Cultural Connection*, 48.

⁴⁵ Vance, *A History*, 360.

⁴⁶ Paul Rutherford, *The Making of Canadian Media*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1978), 103.

⁴⁷ Michael Bliss, "American Investment," in *Partners Nevertheless: Canadian-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Hillmer (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd. 1989), 261.

⁴⁸ Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 384.

nationalistic Committee for an Independent Canada in the 1970s. Gordon was able to influence many Canadians when he called for a limit on American investment.

While Gordon was primarily concerned with the economy, others added their voices to extend the concern to culture. Novelist Hugh MacLennan felt the threat to Canada was not just from American economic influence: “instead of looking at Canada through our own eyes, or interpreting her through our own speech, we look at her, and often we think about her, without realizing half the time we are doing so, through the eyes, values and interests of our neighbors, who are not thinking of us at all.”⁵⁰ Canadian-born economist John Kenneth Galbraith agreed:

If I were still a practicing as distinct from an advisory Canadian I would be much more concerned about maintaining the cultural integrity of the broadcasting system and with making sure Canada has an active independent theatre, book publishing industry, newspapers, magazines and schools of poets and painters ... I wouldn't worry for a moment about the difference between Canadian or American corporations.⁵¹

Economic and cultural nationalism were linked in that US culture was exported by the American entertainment industry. Gordon felt that the state would have to play a more prominent role to counteract the perceived threats from south of the border.

Canada had entered the second of Edwardson's three phases of cultural policy. A leftist new nationalism arose along with Gordon's economic nationalism. Cultural and

⁵⁰ Stephen Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 86.

⁵¹ Ibid.

economic imperialism had provoked an anti-American form of nationalism.⁵² Although Canada was a close ally of the US, this relationship was now being scrutinized.

McCarthyism, social upheaval in the US, and pressure on Canada to adopt nuclear weapons all served to deepen the wedge that existed between Canada and the United States.⁵³ John Diefenbaker was able to capitalize on anti-American sentiment and contribute to it in the elections of 1957 and 1958 as he was elected on an anti-American platform.⁵⁴ Some authors suggest that the latter part of this decade was instrumental to Canadian independence and the development of a new form of nationalism.⁵⁵

4.3 Canadian Football in the 1950s

Throughout this period, Canadian football teams continued to enjoy unprecedented success as attendance climbed and excitement increased. Teams played in front of huge audiences both live and on television and radio. The media provided increased personal coverage of players and coaches, many of whom became important members of the community. American legends such as Johnnie Bright, Jackie Parker and Kenny Ploen made Canada home.⁵⁶ Canadian players including Gerry James, Joe Krol and Normie

⁵² Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, Chapter 3.

⁵³ Edwardson, "Kicking Uncle Sam," 133.

⁵⁴ Azzi, *Walter Gordon*, 58; J. L. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home?: Canadian and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1997), 125.

⁵⁵ Gwyn, *The 49th Paradox*, 57; Sylvia Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: Oxford, 1991), 63.

⁵⁶ The fact that many of these American players moved permanently to Canada and became citizens may have endeared them more to the Canadian fan and encouraged acceptance of the American player in the Canadian game.

Kwong became stars and role models.⁵⁷ A century after the game was first played, Canadian football realized unprecedented popularity.

During the first few months of 1958, conferences were held in Winnipeg where the bright future of Canadian football was discussed. To increase revenue, the possibility of a two-game Grey Cup challenge had been raised. This notion was rejected by Tommy Brook, president of the Calgary Stampeders. Brook, an American, argued that, while two Grey Cup games would generally generate more revenue, the value of the Grey Cup game was not to be measured financially, but by its value and contribution to Canadian nationalism.⁵⁸

In part, as a result of this new nationalism, the nine professional Canadian football teams amalgamated in 1958 by uniting the eastern Interprovincial Rugby Football Union, with the Western Interprovincial Football Union, to create the Canadian Football League. With this new structure, the league's east-west infrastructure now reified the Laurentian thesis. The interplay of these factors further reinforced the association of Canadian football with the nation. Soon it was common for teams from the east to play teams from the west. Its stability and breadth allowed Canadian football to grow in popularity, assisted by the growth in media coverage devoted to professional and elite sport after the war, particularly on television.

⁵⁷ These Canadian players and those that followed such as Russ Jackson, Ron Stewart, and Jim Young represented Canadian football to Canadian fans. The CFL became more tangible, more real, and less abstract through these players who provided a human and identifiable element to the league. This was important in helping attach the game to the nation.

⁵⁸ Jim Coleman, "Burial of the Canadian Rugby Union," *Globe and Mail*, January 4, 1958, 21.

Despite this success, American influence was still a constant. The All-America Football Conference had folded in 1950 resulting in a number of professional players looking for work. Many found it in Canada. Along with the increase in American players, terminology used to name the positions in Canadian football was changed to match the American terms, aspects of the American scoring system were incorporated, and some American strategy replaced Canadian approaches. Resistance to moving closer to the American game was evident from the beginning of the decade to the end. Toronto coach Teddy Morris had been fired in 1950 for refusing to use American players. Joe Krol, star on the Argonaut team, sided with Morris.⁵⁹ He spoke for many upset Canadians when he said Canadian football “is being ruined by Americanization. . . The process has been hastened by the steady stream of American reading material which glorifies the US gridiron hero. . . We who believe in the Canadian game ought to put up a battle for the sport we love.”⁶⁰ An article appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* expressing concern and suggesting the Canadian game should be left alone.⁶¹ In a *Maclean's* magazine article entitled “Bring Back Canadian Football,” the author worried that the Americanization that had occurred in hockey would happen in “our football.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Graham Kelly, *Grey Cup 100* (Edmonton: Full Court Press, 2012), 77-8.

⁶⁰ Joe Krol as told to Allan Acres, “They’re Ruining Rugby,” *Maclean's*, September 15, 1949, 13, 26.

⁶¹ Tommy Shields, “Round and About” *Ottawa Citizen*, August 20, 1953, 20.

⁶² Hec Creighton as told to Trent Frayne, “It’s Time to Bring Back Canadian Football,” *Maclean's* November 1, 1954, 25.

4.4 Canada in the 1960s

The fervent Canadian nationalism that emerged in post-war Canada continued unabated into the 1960s. The high culture focus of Masseyism was giving way to a greater appreciation of the merits of popular culture and its potential for promoting national unity. Indeed, popular culture had the potential of being the most meaningful and powerful expression of Canadian distinctiveness.

However, the influence of American culture continued to be a concern in Canada. The 1960 O’Leary Royal Commission on Publications examined the troubled Canadian periodical industry, which it saw as “part of our national heritage, reflecting something else than our concern with the market place.”⁶³ There were only five Canadian general interest magazines and some of them were in peril financially. The Commission recommended more government involvement to help create a stronger national magazine industry. American television shows were still eagerly consumed by Canadians and the public broadcaster played a role in contributing to this growth. In March of 1963, seven of the top ten shows on the public broadcaster, the CBC, were American.⁶⁴

An examination of the Canadian economy revealed how extensive American influence was in the 1960s. Canada was the world's leading recipient of foreign direct investment. By 1964, 80 percent of long-term foreign investment in Canada was American. Foreign control accounted for approximately 60 percent of Canada’s manufacturing industry, 75 percent of Canadian petroleum and natural gas industry and

⁶³ Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on Publications* (Ottawa: The Queen’s Printer, 1961), 66.

⁶⁴ Granatstein and Hillmer, *For Better or For Worse*, 237.

60 percent of the mining and smelting industry.⁶⁵ Surveys showed that two-thirds of Canadians wanted action taken to lessen the amount of foreign-control in the Canadian economy and a majority felt the Canadian way of life was too influenced by the United States.⁶⁶

The post-war boom continued into the 1960s. There was a decline in working hours, a rise in wages, and the expansion of welfare programs that contributed to this new-found affluence. Between 1951 and 1961, real income in Canada increased 38 percent.⁶⁷ This affluence heightened demand for American cultural products crossing an increasingly porous border. This in turn stimulated nationalist support for the production of Canadian culture. Nationalist sentiment, agitated by concerns about American influence, was becoming a powerful force in Canada.

Regional tensions emerged as a concern in Canada at this time. The Quiet Revolution, which would profoundly change Quebec, was ushered in with the 1960 election of Quebec premier Jean Lesage. Modernization and secularization followed, directed by an activist Quebec government. Some Québécois nationalists looked to their provincial government as a potential nation-state that could protect their culture in an Anglophone continent. Proposals for special status for Quebec threatened the constitutional status quo, while the more radical option of separatism threatened the

⁶⁵ Kari Levitt, *Silent Surrender: the Multinational Corporation in Canada* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1970), 61-2.

⁶⁶ Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love*, 73; Granatstein and Hillmer, *For Better*, 239.

⁶⁷ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sports and Politics*, 15.

integrity of Canada itself. A Quebec Ministry of Cultural Affairs was created in 1961. The federal government responded to this challenge by investing more in culture. The goal of cultural policy in Canada was no longer just to resist Americanization. It became a way of promoting national unity as well.

Support for the welfare state continued, reinforcing the federal government's interventionist disposition. Raboy asserts that the 1960s was an era of "unprecedented expansion of state involvement in organization of social life."⁶⁸ The welfare state was transformed into a central plank of modern Canadian nationalism.⁶⁹ Government influence increased in many areas of society. In 1946, 15 percent of Canadians were employed in the public sector, but that would rise to 35 percent by the early 1970s.⁷⁰ Government intervention as well as nationalism peaked in this era.

4.5 Public Policy Embraces Sport

While the government was becoming more active in cultural policy in response to threats both external, in the form of Americanization, and internal, in the form of a national unity crisis and threat of Quebec separation, other factors were pushing the government towards involvement in sport. Canadian athletes and teams were performing poorly in international competition. There was also concern about the health and physical

⁶⁸ Marc Raboy, *Missed Opportunities: The History of Canadian Broadcasting Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 182.

⁶⁹ Rao, "The National Question," 151.

⁷⁰ J. M. Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), 277.

fitness levels of Canadians. In addition the government realized that popular culture in the form of sport could be a very important component of state policy to be used for the construction of national identity and to contribute to national unity.⁷¹

If one of the goals of the state was to create the nation, sport could be an important element in this project. Sport could help forge links between the state and large parts of the population. Politicians began to view sport as a rich site for the cultivation of nationalism in the modern state.⁷² John Diefenbaker had attended the 1936 Berlin Olympics. He saw the way sport was used to stimulate pride in a people and demonstrate a national image to the world.⁷³ Up until this point, sport had remained outside the purview of the Canadian federal government.

While the Massey Commission had been interested in elite culture, it soon became apparent that movies, music and sport were more attractive to the masses. As Faure suggests, sport is “involved in the construction of a popular national consciousness, without which the power of the state would have no legitimacy.”⁷⁴ The belief that the state should play a role in supporting art, music or other forms of culture soon extended to justify intervention into the area of sport. With so much activity in the realm of culture, it was easy for the government to justify intervention and for the public to accept it. The

⁷¹ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 53

⁷² Ibid., 6.

⁷³ Hallett, *A History of Federal Government Involvement*, 217.

⁷⁴ Jean-Michel Faure, “Forging a French Fighting Spirit: The Nation, Sport, Violence and War,” in *Tribal Identities: Nationalism, Europe, Sport*, ed. J.A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 2008), 89.

government realized the benefits to be gained by intervening in sport, particularly the more visible elite or professional sports.⁷⁵

Television helped foster a sporting nationalism as international sporting events were broadcast to a global audience.⁷⁶ It introduced Canadians to world-class sporting competitions and heightened awareness of them, encouraging nations to use sport to promote international reputations. Through sport, nations could be represented to themselves and to other nations. The popularity of international sport on television provided viewers the opportunity to witness Canadians represent the country in competition. At this time, very few national governments apart from the Eastern Bloc socialist nations were intervening in sport, but those that were saw their athletes perform admirably.⁷⁷

However, Canada's international sporting success was rare. After years of victories, the men's national hockey team failed to bring home the gold medal from the 1954 World Championships, finished third in the 1956 Winter Olympics and lost to the US at the 1960 Olympics. The Canadian Olympic team had won more medals at the 1932 Summer Olympics than the next four post-war Olympic Games combined. Canada won just one medal at the 1960 Summer Olympics. Canadian athletes struggled at the Commonwealth Games as well, winning a total of three gold medals at the Games in 1958 and 1962. The poor performance of Canadian athletes on the international stage

⁷⁵ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 77.

⁷⁶ Hart Cantelon and Donald Macintosh, "Televised Sport as a Purveyor of Canadian Government Sports Policy," *Leisure Studies*, 5 (1986), 149.

⁷⁷ Macintosh, "Sport and the State," 269.

encouraged government action.⁷⁸ Scanning the parliamentary debates during the 1950s and 1960s, Hallett concludes that the majority of references to sport were not concerned with fitness or health but with Canada's international prestige, or rather, lack of it.⁷⁹

It was not just Canadian athletes who were drawing criticism. The poor state of the average Canadian's physical health was raised publically by Prince Philip as well as by the Canadian Medical Association.⁸⁰ The government introduced hospital insurance in the late 1950s and medical insurance in the 1960s. Health was becoming a major concern of the activist welfare state. A brief from the Canadian Sports Advisory Council argued that fitness participation was important for national defence, economic development, culture and health.⁸¹ The government was feeling pressure to intervene.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker visited the Canadian team at the 1959 Pan-American Games in Chicago.⁸² That year, a seven-hour debate had taken place in the House of Commons concerning the establishment of a Canada Sports Council. The government found moderate support for the idea, but balked at such a radical intervention. The next year, Diefenbaker referred to sport in the government's Speech from the Throne and officially opened the Hockey Hall of Fame. At the ceremonial opening, the Prime

⁷⁸ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 23.

⁷⁹ Hallett, *A History of Federal Government Involvement*, 544, 551.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁸¹ Mary Keyes, "Government Involvement in Fitness and Amateur Sport," in *A Concise History of Sport in Canada*, ed. Don Morrow, Mary Keyes, Wayne Simpson, Frank Cosentino, and Ron Lappage (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1989), 326.

⁸² Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 11.

Minister announced his intentions for a National Bill on Fitness and Sport, proposing five million dollars in funding. Diefenbaker's nationalist outlook and interest in sport became the catalysts for the federal government venturing into the area of sport.⁸³ Bill C-131, An Act to Promote Fitness and Amateur Sport, passed unanimously in 1961.

The Bill was the first significant government initiative in the area of sport. The stated intent of the Bill was "to encourage, promote, and develop fitness and amateur sport in Canada."⁸⁴ While the Bill purportedly was concerned with health and fitness, in implementing it the government seemed more interested in improving Canada's performance in international sport to increase prestige, contribute to national identity, and to quell the troubling national unity crisis that emerged in the 1960s. The largest portion of funding was not allocated to fitness or recreational opportunities but went to elite athletes for international competitions. Fitness and recreation could not easily be exploited for national unity or identity. According to Macintosh et al., "[s]port was now important enough to become useful for the federal government in its quest to promote national unity and identity in the country."⁸⁵ The government had for the first time become involved in amateur sport. It still had not ventured so far as to intervene in professional sport, but it was now one step closer to doing so.

⁸³ Hallett, *A History of Federal Government Involvement*, 288.

⁸⁴ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, "An Act to Promote Fitness and Amateur Sport." Bill C-131, 24th Parliament, 4th Session, 1960-61 (Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada - Publishing, 1961).

⁸⁵ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 74.

4.5 The Grey Cup Fiasco

In its early days, television was broadcasting in the literal sense of the term. With a limited number of channels, Canadians generally watched the same shows, followed the same stories and were exposed to the same advertisements. As with radio, a lack of Canadian content was a concern from the outset, but hockey and Canadian football helped lessen the unease, and immediately both sports were entrenched in the broadcasting line-up. As early as 1958 one-tenth of the CBC television schedule was dedicated to sports and by 1961 CBC English television aired more than eight-hundred hours of sporting content, more than any other network in North America.⁸⁶ Exposure on television was essential for transforming a game into an important event.

In 1961 the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG) issued a licence for a second television broadcast network as an alternative to the CBC. The public broadcaster's monopoly was gone and there would now be a competitor to bid for rights to broadcast popular events. The content that would anchor the new network, attracting audiences, drawing advertising, and generating revenue, was to be CFL football.⁸⁷ The new network began its operation with affiliates in eight cities, seven of which had CFL teams. The owners of the network affiliates in each of Winnipeg, Ottawa and Toronto, were members of the masculine power network with direct ties to the CFL team in that city.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Paul Rutherford, *When Television was Young: Primetime Canada 1952-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 241; Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 49; Stewart, *Here's Looking*, 172.

⁸⁷ Both Peers, *The Public Eye*, 237 and Michael Nolan, *CTV: The Network that Means Business* (Edmonton: the University of Alberta Press, 2001), 27 argue that CFL football had become such a valuable commodity that the new network would not have existed without it.

⁸⁸ Peers, *The Public Eye*, 230-2.

Naturally they saw a potential synergy: their television stations offered a means for publicizing their football teams while football games would be popular programming for their stations. John Bassett, owner of the Toronto Argonaut football team, and head of CFTO in Toronto, part of the new CTV network, outbid the CBC for the 1961 and 1962 television rights to eastern CFL games and the Grey Cup game. While the CFL knew this move would severely restrict viewing audiences because of the private network's reduced audience reach, the league felt it would benefit financially from initiating a bidding war.⁸⁹

Flamboyant and arrogant, Bassett had started his career in media as a newspaper reporter and eventually bought the *Toronto Telegram* newspaper in 1952. He was a sport aficionado who knew the value of televising sports. Bassett believed airing football and hockey was a "licence to print money" and initially, half of his network's air-time was devoted to broadcasting sport.⁹⁰ Bassett had purchased a portion of the Argonauts in 1957, the same year he was appointed to the Board of the Toronto Maple Leafs. He was referred to as "the single most important force in the evolution of Canadian television during the Sixties."⁹¹ He founded Baton Broadcasting to run Toronto's first commercial television station. Bassett had served with the army during the war. Well-connected and wealthy, he twice ran unsuccessfully for the Progressive Conservative party in federal elections. His deep ties to the federal party would remain, and eventually he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada and appointed to the Queen's Privy Council of Canada.

⁸⁹ Stewart and Hull, *Canadian Television Policy*, 101.

⁹⁰ Cavanagh, "The Development of Canadian Sports Broadcasting," 308; Susan Gittins, *CTV: The Television Wars* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1999), 52.

⁹¹ Maggie Siggins, *Bassett: John Bassett's Forty Years in Politics, Publishing, Business and Sports* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Limited, 1979), 4.

Bassett was awarded his broadcasting licence when Diefenbaker's Conservatives were in power, amid rumours of political favouritism.⁹² During the seventeen years of Bassett's ownership, the Argos finished in last place nine times, but were still the most profitable football team in the country.⁹³ He was a passionate football fan, and eventually gave up his ties to the Maple Leafs to concentrate on football, purchasing the remaining shares of the Argonaut team in 1971.⁹⁴

The BBG recognized a potential problem in a private network holding rights to an event, the Grey Cup, deemed to be in the national interest. In February of 1961, concern was raised in a House of Commons Broadcasting Committee meeting. The BBG felt that the CBC should air the Grey Cup, adding that "this bid by a single Toronto station . . . has created a chaotic situation in the broadcasting of football in this country for this year."⁹⁵ The BBG issued a press release in early March stating that Canadian football regular season games should be broadcast to the widest possible regional audience, playoff football games should be broadcast to the widest national audience, and finally "it would be in the public interest that the Grey Cup Game should be carried by the Corporation (the CBC), but that the game might be made available to all stations wishing to broadcast it."⁹⁶ Alphonse Ouimet, president of the CBC, sent a letter to all CFL teams

⁹² Ibid., 210.

⁹³ Ibid., 107.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 103, 112. When he sold the Toronto Argonaut team, conditions of the sale included that Bassett receive four prime season tickets for life.

⁹⁵ LAC, Sports Programs – Football – General, RG41-A-V-2, Vol. 872, File 1, 2, PG 7-6-4-PT 1, 1954-61, CBC Report, March 21, 1961.

⁹⁶ Peers, *The Public Eye*, 255.

and league commissioner Sydney Halter demanding Bassett return the rights to the CBC.⁹⁷ The public broadcaster had played an important role in creating support for Canadian football and there was frustration at losing the rights to televise the games, something the network had done for almost a decade.

In November, the BBG issued a statement that stressed the national importance of the Grey Cup game, and the board's willingness to use its authority if negotiations for future football rights did not proceed in a manner more amenable to the national interest.⁹⁸ Bassett sold the rights to the 1961 Grey Cup game to sponsors, who in turn made a deal with the CBC to broadcast the spectacle. The game proved to be enormously popular and was the first televised show to attract more than seven million Canadian viewers. The government had interceded to protect the integrity of the imagined community by ensuring the national shared experience would be available to all within its boundaries.

By 1962, 89 percent of Canadian homes had televisions.⁹⁹ This time Bassett was not so quick to sell the rights to the Grey Cup. The game was the most watched spectacle on television and therefore was very valuable. The CBC had fifty-eight stations and reached more than 90 percent of the population while the CTV network reached just 60 percent of Canadians. This meant that more than seven million Canadians would not be able to view an event telecast only on CTV. CFL Commissioner Halter received a

⁹⁷ Gittins, *CTV*, 52.

⁹⁸ LAC, Notice of Public Hearings (BBG), RG 41, Box 64, BBG Press Release, November 28, 1961; Stewart and Hull, *Canadian Television Policy*, 107.

⁹⁹ Albert Shea, *Broadcasting the Canadian Way* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1980), 31.

telegram of protest from the CBC that read in part “the Grey Cup has become an annual feature of our national life and people in all parts of the country look forward to seeing it on television.”¹⁰⁰ Americans from coast to coast could watch the Grey Cup game on ABC, but millions of Canadians would not be able to watch the game. On June 7 the BBG sent a letter to CTV stating the Board was considering a regulation that would prohibit a private broadcaster from entering into an exclusive contract to carry a sporting event deemed to be in the national interest.¹⁰¹ In July, the BBG sent a letter to both networks indicating it had amended broadcast regulations. The letter requested both networks broadcast the 1962 Grey Cup game.¹⁰² Bassett soon discovered that sponsors were not willing to pay top dollar if 40 percent of the public would not be able to view the game. The head of CTV, Spencer Caldwell, offered the game to the CBC on condition that the corporation would carry CTV sponsors’ advertising with CTV retaining the revenue.¹⁰³ The CBC declined. In an unprecedented move, the BBG ordered the CBC to show the Grey Cup game with sponsorship, potentially compromising the independence of the public broadcaster. The CBC responded by seeking legal advice as a

¹⁰⁰ LAC, Cabinet Documents, RG41, Vol. 222, 11-2-5-pt 10, CBC Telegram, 1962 Fiasco, April 5, 1962.

¹⁰¹ Stewart and Hull, *Canadian Television Policy*, 108.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁰³ Dillon O’Leary, “CBC’s Fate may Rest on the Grey Cup Show,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, September 15, 1962, 6.

spokesperson stated “we refuse to be raped.”¹⁰⁴ The BBG suggested federal government cabinet intervention might be the only way to solve the problem.¹⁰⁵

An article in the Bassett-owned *Toronto Telegram* was critical of CTV owning the rights to the Grey Cup game, suggesting that too many Canadians would not have access to the game. Furthermore, the author, Bob Frewin, reasoned that the CBC could start airing NFL games and that would damage the CFL. The story was killed after it ran in the paper’s morning edition.¹⁰⁶

The issue became more controversial and was raised in the House of Commons dozens of times, with more frequency as Grey Cup Day approached. Liberal Lionel Chevrier rose to move an emergency debate on the telecast as “a definite matter of urgent public importance.”¹⁰⁷ Marcel Lambert, Speaker of the House, referred to it “as a matter of urgent national interest,” and suggested that because the issue had been raised so often, Prime Minister Diefenbaker needed to respond. The Prime Minister stated that he had no right to tell the CBC what to broadcast, but he personally felt that the Grey Cup game was “a great event contributing to national unity and pride,” and he hoped that the game “might well be made available to Canadians in every part of Canada.”¹⁰⁸ On November 7 the BBG announced “Canadians in all parts of the country want an opportunity to see the

¹⁰⁴ Rutherford, *When Television was Young*, 113.

¹⁰⁵ Stewart and Hull, *Canadian Television Policy*, 119.

¹⁰⁶ Siggins, *Bassett*, 118.

¹⁰⁷ “The Grey Cup Hassle,” *Time*, 11.

¹⁰⁸ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*. 25th Canadian Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 109 (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, November 7, 1962), 1376.

telecast of the Grey Cup game.” The board enacted a regulation to solve the problem. It stated that “[a]ll licensees shall broadcast the following programs of public interest.”¹⁰⁹ There was only one item listed, the Grey Cup Football game.

NDP Leader Tommy Douglas raised the issue several times and suggested that all members of the BBG should be replaced.¹¹⁰ Liberal Jack Pickersgill referred to the issue as “a matter of . . . importance, urgency and public interest.”¹¹¹ It was revealed in the House of Commons that the Department of Justice and the deputy attorney general provided legal advice to the CBC regarding this dilemma.¹¹²

The solution tabled by the government identified the Grey Cup game as a national event important for Canadian unity. Members of the House determined that all Canadians had the right to watch it and instructed the CBC to show the game. The day before the game, the BBG capitulated to pressure from the House. The two networks signed a deal to simultaneously telecast the game with the CBC agreeing to carry five commercial announcements from CTV sponsors.¹¹³

The Prime Minister performed the ceremonial kickoff and the game was broadcast across the country on CTV and CBC as well as Radio-Canada and on ABC in the United States. Winnipeg edged out Hamilton by a single point, while almost half of the Canadian

¹⁰⁹ Stewart and Hull, *Canadian Television Policy*, 112.

¹¹⁰ Douglas wanted the members replaced for not forcing the CBC to broadcast the game. See Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*. 25th Canadian Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 109 (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, November 9, 1962), 1456.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, November 13, 1962, 1560.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, November 19, 1962, 1765.

¹¹³ Peers, *The Public Eye*, 257.

population followed the game on radio or television.¹¹⁴ As it turned out, many people watching on television (and in the stadium) did not get to see the game even with the vast broadcast coverage. Thick fog rolled in and the game had to be postponed due to poor visibility. It became the only Grey Cup to be played over two days.

The poor weather conditions did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm ABC broadcaster Jim McKay had for the Canadian game. “This is the greatest football spectacle of them all” he said. Late in the game CBC broadcaster Johnny Esaw revealed how difficult the fog made following the game, stating “I really don’t know what’s going on down there.” League Commissioner Halter was criticized for starting the game on time despite the poor weather forecast. Halter was accused of bowing to pressure from ABC to adhere to the schedule. The potential American television audience in excess of twenty-two million may have influenced Halter’s decision.¹¹⁵

This was the first time the House of Commons had devoted time and interest to a professional sport and it set the precedent for more federal government involvement in the realm of professional football in the future. Three months after the Grey Cup game, it was announced that a parliamentary committee was being formed to help guide policy on Grey Cup broadcasts.¹¹⁶ In March 1963, after four months of negotiations, a five-year deal to share the Grey Cup game was announced between CTV and CBC. As a result of this precedent-setting agreement, for the next quarter century the CBC, Radio-Canada,

¹¹⁴ LAC, Sports Programs - Football - Grey Cup - General, RG41-A-V-2, Vol. 873, File Part 3, PG 7-6-2-2, PT4 1962.

¹¹⁵ Drake, *Weird Facts*, 33-6.

¹¹⁶ LAC, Sports Programs - Football - Grey Cup – General, RG41-A-V-2, Vol. 873, PG 7-6-2-2-PT 5, 1963.

and CTV shared the broadcast of the CFL's championship game, underlining its role as a national cultural event.

Inadvertently, this government intervention harmed the CFL. By forcing both networks to broadcast the Grey Cup, neither CTV nor CBC felt the need to bid competitively against one another, and the networks banded together to artificially deflate the value of broadcast rights.¹¹⁷ Grey Cup rights revenue declined in 1964. The CBC did not even bid. In an effort to create more competition, the CFL sold the broadcast rights for the 1965 season to an advertising firm. Upset at this move, both CTV and CBC refused to purchase telecast rights from the firm and it appeared that CFL regular season and playoff games would not be broadcast on television. Allan McEachern, president of the CFL's western conference, sent a letter to Secretary of State Maurice Lamontagne.¹¹⁸ The letter stated that, if Canadian football was not shown on television, "a refreshingly distinctive Canadian facet of our country will be lost and its citizens will turn more and more towards the United States for their recreational enjoyment."¹¹⁹ Prime Minister Pearson was briefed and was poised to step in.¹²⁰ However, the crisis was averted and both networks agreed to air CFL games.

¹¹⁷ LAC, Football Rights, MG26-N3, Vol. 252, File no. 736.5, Ted Workman, "The Football Television Story," August 23, 1965; Jim Coleman, "CFL Football," *TV Times*, September 20, 1969, 6.

¹¹⁸ The CFL was divided into a western conference and an eastern conference.

¹¹⁹ LAC, Sports Programs – Football – General, RG41-A-V-2, Vol. 872, File 1, 2, PG-7-6-5- PT 3, 1963-65.

¹²⁰ LAC, Football Rights, MG26-N3, Vol. 252, File no. 736.5, Richard O'Hagan, Liberal Press Secretary, memos to Prime Minister Lester Pearson, dated July 27, Aug 7, and Aug 9, 1965.

The Grey Cup Fiasco resulted in animosity between the CFL and the public broadcaster. After the CBC lost the rights to broadcast CFL football, the public broadcaster was again offered an opportunity to televise NFL games. The NFL games would be supplied free to the CBC, with all costs being charged to sponsors.¹²¹ Since NFL games were not required to be blacked out in Canada, every game could be shown across the entire country.¹²² At this time the CBC accepted this offer and started broadcasting NFL games, often airing them at the same time rival CTV was showing a CFL game.¹²³ The public broadcaster was using American entertainment to compete against similar Canadian entertainment.

A survey showed that one in three Canadians felt deprived at not being able to watch CFL football. There was a marked preference for Canadian football over the NFL. TV ratings showed that CFL games attracted four times as many viewers as American games. However, in areas that did not receive CFL coverage, almost as many people were watching NFL football as were watching CFL football in the rest of the country.¹²⁴ After six weeks of NFL coverage in Canada, a survey discovered 92 percent preferred the

¹²¹ LAC, Sports Programs – Football – General, RG41-A-V-2, Vol. 872, File 1, 2, PG7-6-1, Pt.1 1956-1971, Doug Nixon, CBC Director of Television, internal memo, August 4, 1965.

¹²² It was believed that televising games locally would hurt ticket sales, and since the CFL is so reliant on ticket sales games were blacked out in local markets.

¹²³ The majority of Canadians watching NFL football did so on the CBC. While it is true that many homes close to the American border could access NFL games on American channels, this was not the case for the majority of Canadians. In addition, cable television was not widespread in Canada at this time. See Robert Babe, *Cable Television and Telecommunications in Canada* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1975); Ken Easton, *Building an Industry: A History of Cable Television and its Development in Canada* (Lawrencetown Beach, NS: Pottersfield Press, 2000), 184-5.

¹²⁴ LAC, Sports Programs – Football – General, RG41-A-V-2, Vol. 872, File 1, 2, PG7-6-1 Pt.1, 1956-1971, internal CBC memo from CBC Director of Research, Arthur Laird, April 13, 1962.

CFL to the NFL and 84 percent believed the CFL was more exciting than the NFL. The survey also found that 44 percent had become more favorable to American football since the CBC started broadcasting it.¹²⁵ The CBC was starting to create an appetite for what had been a foreign sporting brand. It was an ironic twist that the broadcaster dedicated to promoting Canadian identity instead created interest for an American cultural product that detracted from the similar domestic product.

Canadian professional football, and more specifically, the Grey Cup, remained an important media holding for decades. A report examining television ratings for 1966 revealed that, among regular season sporting events, only hockey could surpass the passion that Canadians held for viewing CFL football. Golf routinely drew 400,000 to 500,000 viewers, and baseball games just over 500,000. NFL football attracted more than 800,000 on average, but CFL regular season games averaged 1.4 million viewers. This was exceeded only by hockey games. But the Grey Cup ruled among championship sporting events. For the 1966-67 season, the Super Bowl attracted more than two million viewers, the World Series 2.5 million, and the NHL playoffs 4.4 million. The 1967 Grey Cup game easily surpassed these numbers attracting more than nine million viewers with a combined reach (radio and television) of almost ten million.¹²⁶

Despite unprecedented popularity demonstrated by these impressive television ratings, the CFL was anything but healthy. In 1961 the *Toronto Star Weekly Magazine*

¹²⁵ Milt Dunnell, "Speaking on Sport," *Toronto Star*, October 24, 1961, 24.

¹²⁶ LAC, Programming - Sports - Football 1965-1969, RG41-B-II-4, Vol. 738, File Part 1, CBC Internal Memo on Blackouts, October 29, 1968.

had featured an article entitled “Canadian Football Faces a Crisis.”¹²⁷ Even with the interest in the Grey Cup, the success of Canadian players, and the intentions of the federal government to support the league, there were several warning signs of a league on the decline. The Saskatchewan Roughriders lost \$80,000 in 1960. The loss was incurred despite a fund raising dinner attended by six hundred people, money raised by club directors writing letters to acquaintances asking for \$10 donations, and costs saved by having fans volunteer to paint the stadium.¹²⁸ League attendance declined in 1961 with the Montreal franchise attracting its fewest fans in almost a decade. The Edmonton Eskimos ran out of money early during the 1964 season. A \$20,000 bank loan and a \$100-a-plate dinner saved the team from collapse.¹²⁹

For the CFL, television continued to be a blessing and a curse. While the CBC, the national network with a mandate to support national unity and Canadian identity, continued to bring American football to Canadians, television also remained the most effective way to bring the Canadian game to Canadians. This became even more important in 1967 when the NHL expanded in the US. While the CFL was struggling, the NHL, recognizing the importance of the American market, added six American-based teams. As a result of this Americanization of hockey, Macintosh called NHL hockey “a much less important symbol of Canadian identity.”¹³⁰ A confidential CBC internal memo

¹²⁷ Jim Hunt, “Canadian Football Faces a Crisis,” *Toronto Star Weekly Magazine*, December 9, 1961, 24-5.

¹²⁸ Jim Hunt, “Regina’s Game Fight to Stay in Football,” *Toronto Star Weekly Magazine*, October 7, 1961, 12.

¹²⁹ Terry Jones, “The Story of the Nervous Nine,” *Edmonton Sun*, October 12, 2014, G18.

¹³⁰ Macintosh, “Sport and Government,” 40.

concluded that, as a result of NHL American expansion, CFL football was even more important as a form of Canadian content. With the Americanization of the NHL, a league which now had ten of twelve teams based in the US, the memo called the CFL “perhaps the most important league in Canada.”¹³¹ This view is ironic when one considers the CBC was complicit in undermining the success and credibility of the CFL by beaming Canadians a steady diet of American football.

4.6 Conclusion

Following the Second World War, the identification of Canadian football with the Canadian nation intensified. Nationalism was on the rise in Canada, fuelled by concerns about American ownership of Canadian resources and growing American cultural influence. Under these conditions, symbols of Canadianness became even more important. The Grey Cup grew to become a national spectacle, a ritual through which Canadians communed in a shared experience every fall.

Just as the print media were the principal element in Anderson’s construction of an imagined community in the nineteenth century, television served the same purpose in the twentieth. Broadcasting was used to create identity, foster a sense of nationhood and limit the pull of continentalism.¹³² This is one reason why the government would become involved in ensuring that Canadians could access televised Canadian football broadcasts.

¹³¹ LAC, Programming - Sports – Football, 1965-1969, RG41-B-II-4, Vol. 738, File Part 1, confidential CBC memo from Ron Hunka, Network Supervisor TV sports, to Gordon Craig, Asst. Network supervisor TV sports, May 7th 1968.

¹³² Eric Thomas, “Canadian Broadcasting and Multiculturalism: Attempts to Accommodate Ethnic Minorities,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 17, no. 3 (1992).

Aided by television, the Grey Cup game and the spectacle surrounding it had become an important ritual of national life, creating the expectation that it should be available for all to see. However, Charland may have been correct in his assertion that technological nationalism was not sufficient.¹³³ Symmetry was needed between the delivery system and the content. Technology continued to bring American culture to Canadian viewers, as the CBC introduced American football to millions of Canadians.

The formation of the CFL in 1958, joining eastern and western leagues, consolidated Canadian professional football into a single national entity. Televised games provided Canadians with more shared experiences of the only Canadian professional sporting league. The CFL reinforced the idea of nation better than any other sports league. As with the railway and television, air travel contributed to the growth of the game, helping Canadian football to more fully occupy the national territory. Once again, bodies travelled across but within national space, and communication signals bound that space. This was the legitimization of the league as a national, and with the passage of time, a traditional cultural icon. It became a key component of the nation, both as it came to be imagined through the media and experienced by Canadians. As media technology continued to develop, the Americanizing process accelerated too, making it even more of a challenge to Canadian nationalism.

Government intervention became commonplace in this period. A Keynesian approach to the economy encouraged the building of the welfare state, and an ideological shift to the left made it acceptable. Nationalism complemented the government's

¹³³ Charland, *Technological Nationalism*, 215.

interventionist disposition. The government introduced policies designed to protect Canadian culture in an effort to promote national identity and unity. Post-Massey, the broadening of cultural definitions of what constituted culture led to greater government involvement in culture that would extend to sport and ultimately to Canadian football.

Television was just one of many changes that dramatically changed Canadian society during the 1950s and early '60s. Sport was becoming a more powerful cultural force as the Massey approach to culture waned. Politically, French-Canadian nationalism was increasing. Economically Canada was becoming more reliant on the US. Prime Minister Pearson appeared at half-time of the 1966 Grey Cup game and hinted at "Canada's problems." Nevertheless, during his nationalistic message he referred to the Grey Cup as "a national institution" and asked Canadians to "show pride in our country" during the upcoming year-long Centennial celebrations.¹³⁴

The government intervened into professional sport for the first time when it forced the national public broadcaster to televise the Grey Cup in the name of national unity. This was an example of the state influencing access to people's leisure choices. It was a powerful example of government intervention to promote the Canadian national interest. Canadian football was being used by the government for the purpose of nation-building. The three entities, Canadian football, the media, and the nation, would continue to grow and intertwine to the point that they would soon be seen as mutually constitutive.

¹³⁴ CBC Television, 1966 Grey Cup broadcast, November 26, 1966. Author's personal collection.

Chapter 5: **The Three Wise Men—Gaudaur, Trudeau, and Munro: 1968-1972.**

As the last chapter demonstrated, during the 1950s the CFL came to facilitate national communion better than ever before and thus became more closely identified with the nation, setting the stage for government intervention in the early 1960s to ensure that the Grey Cup would be broadcast nationally. This chapter will trace the history of Canadian federal government involvement in Canadian professional football from 1968—the year Pierre Trudeau was elected Prime Minister, Jake Gaudaur was appointed Commissioner of the CFL, and John Munro was named Minister of Health and Welfare—until 1972, when Munro was shuffled out of his portfolio. During this time, the federal government once again directly intervened in Canadian football when the Minister of Amateur Sport John Munro announced a federal policy designed to prevent American-based teams from playing in the CFL and Canadian-based teams from playing in any American football league. This action took federal government intervention in the area of professional sport to a new level.

Canadian nationalism continued to grow during this period. As a result of the 1963 election the Liberals, under Pearson, had replaced the Conservative government of Diefenbaker. In 1963 the Liberal government produced a nationalist budget that taxed American investment in Canada. Pressure from the business community forced the government to abandon any action. However, by the late 1960s, public concern about foreign investment was growing, dependency theory was gaining a following in Canadian universities and the state was considering a response.

Compared to economic nationalism, cultural nationalism was fairly easy to pursue as it gratified nationalist sentiment without much political cost to the government or economic cost to the country. Cultural nationalism had the further advantage of being highly symbolic. Economic nationalism also did not arouse the passion of nationalists as much as cultural nationalism could. After the embarrassing reversal of the 1963 budget, the Pearson government concentrated its efforts on cultivating nationalism through culture.

The year 1968 provided an interesting backdrop to the football season. The rising separatist movement in Quebec meant uniting the nation was a growing challenge. The Parti Québécois, a nationalist provincial political party in Quebec, was formed with the mandate of negotiating autonomy for Quebec. Amidst this serious domestic concern, the CFL seemed to be losing ground to American professional football. The political economy of football conspired against the CFL in its struggle to compete. The NFL featured teams in larger metropolitan areas that generated a robust complex of media coverage, advertising, sponsorship and media revenues. In contrast, CFL teams generally served smaller markets with fewer resources to support franchises.

Dependence on the United States for players, markets or revenue has been a constant in the history of Canadian professional sport just as it has been in Canadian economic history in general. This has been the case with professional team sports including hockey, baseball, lacrosse, and basketball.¹ The Canadian inferiority complex often results in the activities of the metropole being viewed as “major league.” These

¹ See Wayne Simpson, “Hockey,” in *A Concise History of Sport in Canada*, ed. Don Morrow et al. (Toronto: Oxford, 1989); Morrow, “Baseball;” Fisher, *Lacrosse*; Daly, *Canada’s Other Game*.

activities are frequently assumed to be much more important than what is going on in the hinterland.² McTeer and his co-authors argue that the reversal in the fortunes of Canadian professional football can be attributed to Americanizing trends within the national context at this time. The authors conclude that Canadians were responding with less enthusiasm to the CFL, perceiving it as inferior to its American counterpart.³

Starting in 1969, academic Bruce Kidd wrote about the Americanization of sport in a series of magazine articles calling for federal government protection for Canadian sport.⁴ While Canadians might not have personally identified with American control of a cultural or manufacturing sector, the loss of either their local football team or the Grey Cup was something with which many could identify. Though hockey was viewed as the national sport of Canada, only two of the 12 NHL teams were Canadian-based. There were concerns that the league was being Americanized.⁵ To fans of Canadian football, the potential loss of the Canadian game represented the loss of a distinctive feature of the Canadian way of life.

² See Hayes, *Blue Jay Fever*, 168-171 for insight into this.

³ McTeer, et al., "The Americanization," 11.

⁴ Bruce Kidd, "The Continentalization of Canadian Sport: Part 1: Hockey," *Canadian Dimension*, July 1969, 6-9; Kidd, "Part II: Football;" Bruce Kidd, "Remember When Hockey was Canadian?" *Weekend Magazine*, March 20, 1971, 16-21. Years later Kidd wrote about the role the Americanization of sport played in the disintegration of English speaking Canada as a distinct community: "In sport, the styles of play, . . . and team loyalties which once combined to enunciate a national sense of identity have now become co-opted by the very forces that seek to undermine it" (Kidd, "Sport, Dependency," 289).

⁵ See Kidd and Macfarlane, *The Death of Hockey* for analysis of this.

5.1 1960s Canada: Cultural Policy and Nationalism

Prime Minister Pearson's attempts to encourage Canadian nationalism produced a new powerful symbol to unite Canadians and fuel this intense nationalism. The selection of the Maple Leaf national flag to replace the Red Ensign was particularly important as it represented a movement away from Britain and a decision to be independent. The national flag did not feature any vestiges of the UK, the mother country. In 1965, acknowledgement of *O Canada* as the national anthem, instead of *God Save the Queen*, reinforced this trend.⁶ The words "royal" and "imperial" began to disappear from federal institutions and the term "dominion" was used less often. As historian Philip Buckner put it, any "lingering sense of a shared [British] identity seems to have vanished remarkably quickly in the 1960s."⁷ Canada was modifying its myth-symbol complex to signify it was an independent nation.⁸

In 1964, Secretary of State for Canada Maurice Lamontagne, one of Pearson's closest advisors, announced the government's intention to centralize federal cultural activities within the Secretary of State for Canada and create a cabinet committee on cultural affairs. Lamontagne felt that Canada required more state activity in the area of

⁶ See Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada*, 381.

⁷ Philip Buckner, "The Long Goodbye: English Canadians and the British World," in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. Philip Buckner and Douglas Francis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 201.

⁸ See José E. Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2006), particularly Chapter 6. For a different interpretation of this change see C.P. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964-1968* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

culture.⁹ Quebec had created its own Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1961. In essence Lamontagne created a department emphasizing cultural agencies designed to promote unity. The budget for the Canada Council grew to \$10 million by 1965, and the Council was pressured to give greater consideration to Canadian content.¹⁰ This greatly increased the presence of Canadian theatre, dance, literature and symphonies.¹¹

The Liberal government was becoming involved with many forms of popular culture, including magazines, music, movies, television, even sport. The focus of cultural policy was no longer the high-brow Masseyism of the previous decade. As a result, policies were designed to protect and promote many aspects of culture. Royal Commissions were established that examined Canadian culture in the areas of broadcasting and publishing. The Royal Commission on Publications recommended that Canadian companies not receive tax deductions for advertising in American magazines. The Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) was founded in 1967 to support the development of a Canadian feature film industry. Shortly after, the Liberals formulated an Arts and Cultural Policy with a goal of national unity.¹²

Powerful symbols such as a new flag and anthem fueled Canadian nationalism. The height of state-sponsored nationalism in Canada occurred in 1967 with Canada's centennial celebrations and Expo '67. The Centennial was both a boost to, and an expression of, the new nationalism. Its highlight was Expo, which attracted more than

⁹ Magder, *Canada's Hollywood*, 120.

¹⁰ Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 163.

¹¹ Ostry, *The Cultural Connection*, 101.

¹² Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 195.

fifty million people and featured participation from more than 120 countries. The budget devoted to the Centennial party was the largest single infusion of cash in the history of Canadian culture.¹³ Libraries, monuments, and sport complexes were erected across the country to commemorate the centennial. A Centennial train depicting Canada's history crossed the country. Some of the Centennial projects emphasized the Massey approach to Canadian culture with theatres and art galleries constructed and plays, ballets and musicals produced. Others involved more popular forms of culture such as bathtub racing or outhouse burning. The centennial celebrations were a successful nation-building exercise that saw the state become even more involved in the lives of Canadians. This wave of nationalism peaked in the late 1960s and early 1970s. To invoke this context henceforth I will use the term "peak nationalism."

For Rao, the period at the end of the 1960s marked the height of popular nationalism in Canada.¹⁴ Canadian sport, including Canadian football, became more important as nationalism intensified. During Canada's Centennial year, the Grey Cup game was played in Ottawa to contribute to the celebration. The game was broadcast in colour from coast-to-coast-to-coast on three Canadian networks. Governor General Roland Michener performed the ceremonial kick off and Prime Minister Pearson was in attendance, giving interviews in both official languages. The Centennial Maple Leaf symbol adorned both end zones. Canadian author Mordecai Richler wrote that "[o]ther

¹³ Mackey details the costs of the national celebration and government grants for centennial projects as well as other activities including Expo '67. See Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 71-2.

¹⁴ Rao, "The National Question," 168.

more brutalized nations were knit by civil wars or uprisings against tyrants, but Canada, our Canada, was held together by a pigskin.”¹⁵

Broadcasting continued to be a very important forum to be used for the construction of nationhood. Experts felt that Canadianizing the media would increase people’s attachment to the country.¹⁶ According to the government, national identity and national unity remained the two most important goals of Canadian broadcasting. The 1968 Broadcasting Act, featuring tighter Canadian content regulations and limits on foreign ownership, was more anti-free market and pro-indigenous culture than any previous Canadian broadcasting legislation. The government created the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC) to replace the BBG. Political Economist Stephen Clarkson wrote, through “regulations and provisions imposed when allocating broadcasting licences, the CRTC became a proxy for the state in all of its broadcasting activities, with substantial consequences for many cultural industries.”¹⁷

During the ‘60s, Canadian nationalists’ concerns about the United States continued to grow. America’s war in Vietnam increased the distance between the two neighbours. Race riots, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert and Martin Luther King Jr., and rioting at the Democratic convention in Chicago in 1968 provided further evidence to Canadians that the United States was not a nation to emulate. Canadians

¹⁵ Mordecai Richler, “Bedlam in Bytown - a Disillusioned Account of Grey Cup Week,” *The Toronto Star Weekly Magazine*, December 23, 1967, 26.

¹⁶ Joel Smith, “Media Policy, National Identity and Citizenry in Changing Democratic Societies: The Case of Canada,” in *Media Policy, National Identity and Citizenry in Changing Democratic Societies*, ed. Joel Smith (Durham, NC: Canadian Studies Centre, Duke University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Stephen Clarkson, *Uncle Sam and Us* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 365.

could gloat about their distinctiveness and superiority, which helped nationalism grow even more.¹⁸

Part of this nationalism was influenced by a nationalist cultural elite that eyed the United States critically. Nationalist members of the intelligentsia sounded the alarm about the political, economic and cultural imperialism of the United States posing a major threat to Canada. George Woodcock, Northrop Frye, and Hugh MacLennan continued to contribute to the Canadian cultural conversation at the time, warning Canadians of American imperialism. Threats of cultural dependence were echoed by academics Donald Creighton and W.L. Morton, the latter warning of the “complete Americanization of Canadian thought, government, and national purpose.”¹⁹ Politicians such as Walter Gordon joined the chorus. In 1965, philosopher George Grant had published the popular and powerful cautionary book *Lament for a Nation*, warning of the disappearance of Canada.

Scores of publications followed Grant’s *Lament for a Nation*, echoing its argument that Canada was losing its history, its tradition, its distinctiveness and its purpose. All warned of the threats to Canada’s existence. In 1966, Walter Gordon published *A Choice for Canada: Independence or Colonial Status*; this was followed by Al Purdy’s *The New Romans: Candid Canadian Opinion of the U.S.*, and Dennis Lee’s nationalist collection of poetry *Civil Elegies*, both published in 1968. Ian Lumsden edited a collection of essays

¹⁸ Robert Wright. *Virtual Sovereignty: Nationalism, Culture and the Canadian Question* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2004), 60.

¹⁹ Philip Massolin, *Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition and the Challenge of Modernity, 1939-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 264.

about Americanization in 1970 titled *Close the 49th parallel etc: The Americanization of Canada*, the same year Kari Levitt produced *Silent Surrender: The Multinational Corporation in Canada*.²⁰ Starting that year *Maclean's* magazine produced a number of articles on the development of this new nationalism.²¹ Peter Morris, writing in *The North American Review*, called the new nationalism a "Declaration of Independence," and the Prime Minister's foreign policy advisor referred to a "New Canada."²² Many of these authors were elevated to public prominence in promoting this new nationalism. Most of them called on the state to further the objectives of an independent Canada.

5.2 Americanization and Canadian Football

As nationalists warned that Canada was being inundated by American cultural forces, the realm of football seemed no exception. Canadian cities were identified as potential locations for American football expansion. Canadians once again demonstrated ambivalence in both welcoming and resisting American culture. As early as 1955, officials from Toronto were lobbying the NFL for a franchise. "Toronto is ready for big league football," said the city's chief negotiator, who met with NFL officials and reported

²⁰ Walter Gordon, *A Choice for Canada: Independence or Colonial Status* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966); Al Purdy, *The New Romans: Candid Canadian Opinion of the U.S* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968); Dennis Lee, *Civil Elegies* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1968); Ian Lumsden, *Close the 49th Parallel etc: The Americanization of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970); Levitt, *Silent Surrender*.

²¹ See Resnick, *The Land of Cain*, 173. Examples from *Maclean's* include Courtney Tower, "The Heartening Surge of a new Canadian Nationalism," *Maclean's*, February, 1970, 1-5; Walter Stewart, "The Canada Firsters March on Ottawa," *Maclean's*, December 1970, 1-3; "Canada's Independence Inventory," *Maclean's*, December 1971, 24, 57-62; Christina Newman, "Growing Up Reluctantly," *Maclean's*, August 1972, 21-22, 56-60.

²² Peter Morris, "Declarations of Independence," *The North American Review*, March 1972, 3-4; Ivan Head, "The Foreign Policy of the New Canada," *Foreign Affairs* 50 no. 2, March 1972, 237-252.

that they had expressed an interest in having a team in Canada.²³ Despite higher salaries for professional football players in Canada, American football was considered *big league* compared to Canadian football. In 1958, retired quarterback Frank Filchok, coach of the Sarnia team, had predicted that within six years, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver would all be home to NFL teams.²⁴

Just as professional sport was growing in Canada, it was also expanding in the United States. A second professional football league emerged in 1960 when the American Football League (AFL) was formed. An article in *Maclean's* magazine speculated that the AFL was interested in both the Toronto and Montreal markets for potential franchises.²⁵ In 1962, an article in the *Toronto Telegram* revealed that Toronto Argonaut part-owner John Bassett was lobbying NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle for an NFL franchise for the city of Toronto.²⁶ Journalist Bob Frewin revealed that Bassett was interested in transferring the Argonauts to the NFL. In November 1964, a construction magnate named Lawrence Shankman officially applied for an NFL franchise for Toronto. He offered to build a domed stadium (without taxpayer assistance) and was willing to meet the league requirements of the day including a 40,000-seat stadium, 25,000 season-

²³ Bob Frewin, "Eric Craddock Talks of NFL Team for Toronto," *Canadian Football News*, February 1955, 3.

²⁴ Jack Koffman, "Frank Filchok Likely Wrong in All Three Grid Predictions," *CFL Program, Ottawa vs Toronto*, October, 18, 1958, 3. Author's personal collection.

²⁵ Jim Trimble and Trent Frayne, "Canadian Football beats the American game," *Maclean's*, August 27, 1960, 47.

²⁶ Siggins, *Bassett*, 112. Bassett tried for years to own an NFL team. Years later he would fail in his attempt to sue the NFL for not allowing his Memphis WFL team entry into the league. See Siggins, *Bassett*, 232.

ticket subscribers and working capital of \$1 million. The next year, when the National Football League produced a list of ten cities considered for expansion, Toronto was included on the list.²⁷

At the same time, influential citizens in Montreal were working hard to bring American football to that city. Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau and city councillor Gerry Snyder were actively petitioning for a National Football League team.²⁸ The pair had successfully lobbied for a Major League Baseball expansion team to be located in Montreal. This was precedent setting as it was the first time a major American professional sporting league had established a franchise outside the United States.²⁹ Professional baseball at the highest level had joined the continentalist NHL and a continental football league might not be far behind.

In June 1969, *Weekend Magazine* published a feature article entitled “Is Canadian Football Dying?”³⁰ Despite the success of the 1950s when the Canadian league outbid the NFL for players, the CFL was now struggling to hide the numerous troubles it was experiencing. Sports reporters started to predict the demise of the league.³¹ The CBC was bringing NFL football games into the living rooms of Canadians, and competition from American teams increased player salaries. In 1968, quarterback Peter Liske of Calgary

²⁷ Steve Simmons, “T.O. no closer to landing NFL team,” *Toronto Sun*, September 8, 2006, S1.

²⁸ David Naylor and Stephen Brunt, “Touch down in T.O.,” *Globe and Mail*, October 27, 2007, S1.

²⁹ Excluding the 1946-47 Toronto Huskies that played for one season in the Basketball Association of America.

³⁰ Andy O’Brien, “Is Canadian Football Dying?” *Weekend Magazine*, June 28, 1969, 8-9.

³¹ Siggins, *Bassett*, 114; Trent Frayne, “Send for Gaudaur,” *Maclean’s*, November 1968, 39.

surveyed fans for his MBA project at Penn State University. He found that, despite the CFL's struggles, and the interest in American football on CBC, the majority of fans still preferred the Canadian game.³² Canadian football fans were divided between those with world class aspirations and those who valued a traditional indigenous product.

5.3 Jake Gaudaur, Pierre Trudeau, and John Munro

The CFL continued to struggle. In 1966, Jake Gaudaur, President and General Manager of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, had hired a management consulting firm to examine the CFL's operations. Gaudaur realized that the league was suffering from declining television ratings and falling ticket sales. The confidential report revealed that, while most clubs were still profitable, teams in the East were suffering financially as interest in the NFL increased.³³ In 1966 the staid Sydney Halter had retired as commissioner. A new dynamic leader was needed to captain the ship through turbulent times. Keith Davey, the former national campaign director of the federal Liberal party, was hired and one month into the job realized the league was badly in need of an overhaul. He issued a platform calling for dramatic changes to combat the growing popularity of the NFL in Canada. The manifesto called for, among other things, a full-time publicist for the league, moves to increase scoring, and improved officiating. In addition, Davey's plan called for an increase in the amount teams had to contribute to the

³² Andy O'Brien, "Football as the Fans Want it," *Weekend Magazine*, November 16 1968, 15.

³³ Siggins, *Bassett*, 114.

equalization fund.³⁴ In 1964, equalization payments were implemented in a similar fashion and time as federal equalization payments to the provinces. The idea was to redistribute wealth from more financially successful teams to the weaker ones. Davey's prescription for change, according to the team administrators, was too radical. He did not receive their support and was dismissed after just fifty-six days on the job. He was replaced by interim commissioner Ted Workman, owner of the Montreal Alouettes, who lasted just nine months. BC Lions President Allan McEachern replaced Workman for a few months before Jake Gaudaur was asked to take over.

Gaudaur had been associated with the league for twenty-eight years. He started as a player and eventually worked his way to become president and general manager of the Hamilton team. His association with football was only interrupted while he served as a pilot in the Second World War. In 1950 he had been named the first team captain of the Hamilton Tiger-Cat club that was formed by amalgamating the two Hamilton teams. He had already been instrumental in shaping the existence of the CFL in his capacity as a team executive. In 1958 he had sent a brief to all of the teams proposing that the two conferences join to form a truly national league. This was possible with the advent of air travel making it much easier to cross the country. Gaudaur, a shrewd negotiator, carefully worded his message so administrators would not feel forced into the situation. As a result of his action, the CFL had been formed in 1958.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid., 115.

³⁵ Jeffrey Goodman, *Huddling Up: The Inside Story of the Canadian Football League* (Don Mills: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1982), 82.

Still just a Tiger-Cat executive, Gaudaur pushed for an interlocking schedule which would see eastern teams play western teams in league play to reflect the national character of the league. Despite resistance by teams concerned about increased travel costs, this was realized in 1961.³⁶ In 1964 once again Gaudaur was the force behind bringing the administrators from each team together, this time convincing them to participate in revenue sharing to strengthen the fragile league. Gaudaur believed that the league would “die” if action was not taken.³⁷ Given his track record, he was the logical choice to become the first full-time league commissioner.

One reason Gaudaur accepted the position was his concern for the future of the league. Gaudaur was a staunch Canadian nationalist with family roots in Canada dating back to the eighteenth century. He was of French-Canadian, Ojibwe and Scottish descent.³⁸ Gaudaur felt that the CFL needed not only to survive but thrive to contribute to nation building. He felt that most owners were not involved in an effort to become wealthy, but were performing community service in taking care of a national asset.³⁹ In light of federal government intervention into all aspects of Canadian culture, Gaudaur

³⁶ Ibid., 82-4.

³⁷ See Goodman, *Huddling Up*, Chapter 8 and Appendix B. Gaudaur used the word “die” three times in the brief.

³⁸ Edward W. Hathaway, “Jacob Gill ‘Jake’ Gaudaur,” in *Native Americans in Sports*, ed. C. Richard King, (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2004), 124.

³⁹ Jake Gaudaur, *1970 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1971, 6, available in the Canadian football archives.

was convinced that government intervention was necessary to aid Canadian professional football.⁴⁰

Five days after Gaudaur was installed as Commissioner of the CFL, Pierre Trudeau was elected federal leader of the Liberal party. The following June, riding on the coattails of the euphoric, nationalistic Centennial celebrations, Trudeau was elected Prime Minister, capturing the imagination of a nation while winning the only majority government in any of the four elections contested during the decade.

Trudeau, an athletic individual, was elected at a time when Canadians seem to possess a confidence that matched his. Trudeau publicly declared a disdain for nationalism but had written about it being a potential tool for leaders.⁴¹ The new nationalism that emerged in Quebec had been intensified by French president Charles de Gaulle when he referred to an independent Quebec in Montreal during his visit to Expo in the summer of 1967. Trudeau felt that intensive investment in state sponsored cultural nationalism could challenge the appeal of French-Canadian nationalism. Despite Trudeau's contempt for nationalism, he saw it as an integral tool to combat Quebec separatism.⁴²

The Canadianness of the CFL and the populist trajectory of cultural policy intersected with the interests and actions of John Munro. The Liberal MP, representing Hamilton, home to the Canadian Football Hall of Fame and a legendary team in the CFL,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁴¹ Dwight Zakus, "A Genesis of the Canadian Sport System in Pierre Trudeau's Political Philosophy and Agenda," *Sport History Review* 27, no. 1 (May 1996), 39.

⁴² Ibid., 37.

was elected in the first federal campaign after the passing of the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act of 1961. Munro was a sports fan and a staunch supporter of the sports bill. He would be a key figure in shaping the government's involvement in sport for the next two decades. Munro believed that government intervention was justifiable for a form of culture that interested 90 percent of the population.

Munro's first ministerial appointment was as Minister of Health and Welfare, a portfolio responsible for sport in the Trudeau cabinet in 1968. In a speech that year, he outlined how sport could promote national unity, give Canadians confidence, boost the international stature of Canada, and inspire mass participation.⁴³ Jake Gaudaur was also from Hamilton, and he would work closely with Munro to encourage the government to support the CFL. Hamilton was one of the smallest cities to have a professional football team in Canada, and would be unlikely to be chosen home to any other professional sports team.

Munro was asked to supply the foreword to the first comprehensive book published on the history of football in Canada. He agreed, demonstrating his interest in the sport. In the foreword Munro called Canadian football "one of our truly national sports" and referred to the Grey Cup as "an institution" and "a much needed force for national unity in this land." Perhaps hinting at the impending trouble the game would face, he also expressed his sincere hope that the game would return to its roots and become more Canadian, featuring Canadian coaches and star players, and that the spirit of the game

⁴³ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sports and Politics*, 65

“not be allowed to fade away.”⁴⁴ Despite the league’s challenges, some Canadians regarded the CFL as a beloved Canadian cultural institution. To its supporters, Canadian football had become a unifying force in the country.

5.4 Trudeau, Nationalism, and Cultural Policy

The election of Pierre Trudeau as Prime Minister ushered in Edwardson’s third moment of Canadian cultural policy, “cultural industrialism” which “posited nationhood upon the success of cultural industries.”⁴⁵ The federal government began to subsidize commercial cultural producers, which set the precedent for the government intervening into the private sector to promote cultural nationalism. Under Trudeau, cultural policy would be used not just to promote national identity indirectly through supporting Canadian culture, but very deliberately to promote national unity.⁴⁶ Government intervention would be a natural extension of his beliefs. National unity would become Trudeau’s *raison-d’être*. As Gaudaur set about saving the CFL, Trudeau set about saving the country.

A new federal policy was introduced in the area of book publishing emphasizing subsidies rather than content quotas to help an industry that was largely foreign-owned.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ John Munro, “Foreword” to Frank Cosentino, *The Grey Cup Years* (Toronto: Musson, 1969), 7.

⁴⁵ Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 18.

⁴⁶ Marc Raboy, “Pas de deux: Media Policy and Cultural Politics in Canada and Quebec,” in *Media Policy, National Identity and Citizenry in Changing Democratic Societies*, ed. Joel Smith (Durham, NC: Canadian Studies Centre, Duke University Press, 1998), 96.

⁴⁷ In 1948 only 14 English Canadian works of fiction had been published but by 1980 Canadian works accounted for 25 percent of book sales. Canada. *Report of the Royal Commission on National*

In 1970 the Davey Senate Committee on Mass Media recognized the important role the media played in the construction of nationhood. The committee recommended removing the tax exemptions Canadian companies enjoyed advertising in Canadian editions of American magazines *Time* and *Reader's Digest*. Eventually the government prohibited American ownership of Canadian newspapers and eliminated tax breaks for advertising in any publications in Canada that were not Canadian-owned. By the end of the decade, governments in Canada were spending more than \$2 billion a year on culture and seven of the top fifty industries ranked by sales were wholly or partially controlled by government.⁴⁸ Despite all these efforts, a 1970 Gallup poll revealed that half of Canadians thought the Canadian way of life was too influenced by American television.⁴⁹

The seductive nature of popular culture from America was powerful in a consumer society. Nationalism theorist Ernest Gellner was surprised by English Canada's commitment to an independent country, given the influence of the United States.⁵⁰ Pierre Juneau, the first Chair of the CRTC noted Canadians were "a minority voice in their own country."⁵¹ American publications outnumbered Canadian newspapers and magazines three to one and US firms controlled more than three-quarters of the English book market

Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951 (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1951), 228; Audley, *Canada's Cultural Industries*, 88.

⁴⁸ Gwyn, *The 49th Paradox*, 140.

⁴⁹ Audley, *Canada's Cultural Industries*, 1983, xxv.

⁵⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 45.

⁵¹ Susan Crean, *Who's Afraid of Canadian Culture* (Don Mills: General Publishing Co., 1976), 52.

in Canada.⁵² Cable television grew, resulting in most Canadians having access to more American channels than Canadian. In the 1970s, 98 percent of Canadians were being entertained and informed by American programming.⁵³ The president of the CBC referred to the “American electronic rape of Canada” and “cultural colonization.”⁵⁴

The nationalist movement produced political action in the form of the Waffle movement of the NDP, which advocated a combination of nationalism and socialism on the grounds that in Canada, neither one was possible without the other. The nationalist mood even affected Canadian universities as there was concern about the number of American faculty members and the amount of American academic content.⁵⁵ Publications such as *This Magazine* and *Canadian Dimension* were started as a response to the academic nationalism fermenting in Canada.

In 1970, the non-partisan nationalist organization, The Committee for an Independent Canada (CIC), was formed and quickly grew to include over 10,000 members, including Pierre Berton, Peter C. Newman, and other prominent Canadians. The Council of Canadians and the Committee to Strengthen Canadian Culture were other nationalist groups that emerged to rally state support in the areas of national identity and

⁵² Ibid., 235.

⁵³ David Taras, “Swimming Against the Current: American Mass Entertainment and Canadian Identity” in *Canada and the United States: Differences that Count*, ed. D.M. Thomas (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2000), 194.

⁵⁴ Magder, *Canada’s Hollywood*, 6.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Cormier, *The Canadianization Movement: Emergence, Survival and Success* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

unity. In 1971 the CIC sent a petition signed by over 170,000 people to the Prime Minister demanding limits to foreign investment and ownership.⁵⁶

Economic nationalism was also evident with Mel Watkins' 1968 Task Force on Foreign Ownership and the Structure of Canadian Investment calling for a reduction in foreign investment in Canada and more state intervention. Watkins called for a revised version of Macdonald's National Policy. This was followed by the Wahn Report that recommended Canadian ownership of companies operating in Canada, and the Gray Report on Foreign Direct Investment in Canada that advocated a more comprehensive policy for screening foreign takeovers of Canadian corporations. Economic nationalism supplemented the state's cultural nationalism to reinforce Canadian peak nationalism. Both Rao and Wright suggest that this period was a time of popular nationalism unlike any other in Canadian history.⁵⁷

5.5 The Task Force on Sport

Prime Minister Trudeau was searching for instruments of national unity to be used as counterweights to divisive forces. Trudeau realized that internal tensions could be assuaged through sport.⁵⁸ Considering Trudeau's interest in sport, physical activity, and

⁵⁶ The CIC was successful in fighting for the implementation of tougher rules regarding Canadian content on radio and television.

⁵⁷ Rao, "The National Question," 168; Wright, *Virtual Sovereignty*, 154.

⁵⁸ Trudeau wrote that his political theory involved using "counterweights." See P.E. Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), xxiii. Zakus labels sport one such counterweight, "A Genesis," 39.

fitness, this was a natural fit.⁵⁹ While the Conservatives under Diefenbaker emphasized sport on the international scene, the Liberals under Trudeau sought to develop sport domestically to foster unity and identity.⁶⁰

As stated previously, international competitions are the most obvious example of sport representing the nation, but Canadian amateur teams had experienced limited success in international competitions at this time. During the 1950s and 1960s, the media and the public's attention turned towards professional sport. The Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens were dominant in the NHL. From the end of the Second World War in 1945 until 1970, Canadian teams won the Stanley Cup 20 out of a possible 25 times. Canadian professional football was linked to a popular form of nationalism that was related to but somewhat different than the nationalism supported by the academics, artists and members of the media. Football could be viewed as a "public good" and therefore government intervention could be justified.

During a 1968 federal election campaign stop in BC, Trudeau said that he had "come to the realization that the federal government must do more for sport."⁶¹ He indicated that he was also concerned that the NHL had expanded to six American cities and had overlooked Canadian markets such as Vancouver and Quebec City. This oversight was unacceptable, particularly at a time of peak nationalism. Professional sport attracted large audiences and therefore could unite different languages, cultures and

⁵⁹ Zakus, "A Genesis," 39.

⁶⁰ Bruce Kidd, "The Canadian State and Sport: The Dilemma of Intervention," A paper presented at the Second annual conference of the National Association for Physical Education, Brainerd, Minnesota, 1980, 241.

⁶¹ Broom and Baka, *Canadian Governments*, 27.

regions. It was the perfect vehicle to unite east and west, French and English. Trudeau promised to form a task force to study sport. Less than six weeks after the election, a committee was struck.⁶² The members were world champion skier Nancy Greene, YMCA president Harold Rea, and retired Laval physiology professor Paul DesRuisseaux. The task force was to study professional and amateur sport in Canada and provide guidance regarding federal government involvement.

There was little disagreement among the Task Force members. They viewed sport as a potent unifying force with the potential to provide commonality and bridge differences. As stated in the 1969 report,

We cannot weigh with any accuracy the contribution Canadian sports development played in knitting a nation, but it must have been considerable. . . . If we think it important to keep an intrinsically Canadian sense of community in the face of the colorful and penetrating attractions of our powerful neighbour, sport is one of the most effective ways of doing it.⁶³

However, *The Task Force Report* also contained a caution: “Canadian sport, in many of its branches, is in serious difficulty. A mass of evidence gathered both in this country and abroad, has convinced us that many of the problems facing sport in Canada can only be overcome with the assistance of the federal government.” The report suggested

⁶² Hallett, *A History of Federal Government Involvement*, 771 makes the case that the idea for the Task Force was Trudeau’s alone. Broom and Baka, *Canadian Governments*, 27 also argue that these concerns are Trudeau’s personal concerns.

⁶³ Canada, *Report of the Task Force Report on Sport for Canadians* (Ottawa: The Queen’s Printer, 1969), 19.

Canadians enjoyed state involvement in creating and re-creating the country to overcome previous challenges, implying that the state would play a similar role in sport.⁶⁴

While that approach was not a surprise, other aspects of the report were. It was concerned with sport, not fitness or recreation, and, unlike the approach taken by most countries, the report concentrated on professional instead of amateur Olympic sport. The report argued that professional sport could be used to unite the country and act as “an effective antidote to economic and cultural domination by the United States.”⁶⁵ The government for the first time now had an official advisory body recommending support for Canadian professional sport.

The report raised concerns over the continental structure of professional hockey, but singled out football as an example of a professional sport contributing to national unity. The CFL was praised for using a quota that assured the majority of players would be Canadian, featuring only Canadian teams, being distinctive from American football, and providing national competition in defiance of continental norms. The report also praised the Grey Cup as a force for national unity.

The report was critical of the NHL. While the vast majority of the players were Canadian, the report expressed concern over the Americanization of the league, with most teams situated in the United States, and the best Canadian players moving to the US and not representing Canada internationally.⁶⁶ While pro hockey had just two Canadian

⁶⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁵ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 74.

⁶⁶ In the future, elected officials would express concern that the CFL could end up like the NHL unless the government acted to keep it Canadian. See Goodman, *Huddling Up*, 134, 140.

teams, professional football was organized along east-west lines featuring nine Canadian teams based in six provinces stretching from Quebec to the West Coast. While the NHL was accused of placing economic interest ahead of both hockey and the community, the CFL was praised for its allegiance to communities. The report identified Canadian football as the most popular television show in Canada and concluded that the CFL demonstrates “the Canadian wish to keep at least some distinction from American patterns” and “gives us something uniquely our own” while making a substantial contribution to Canada as a nation.⁶⁷

This criticism of NHL hockey is surprising considering how closely the game at the professional level had become tied to the nation. Starting in the 1930s NHL hockey had been nationally broadcast on first, CBC radio, and later CBC television as *Hockey Night in Canada*. During the Depression, consuming the games on the CBC became a very powerful form of inexpensive popular national entertainment, providing a common Canadian experience.⁶⁸ As the majority of players were from Canada, the CBC helped Canadians identify with these celebrities, cementing the game’s iconic place in Canadian culture. Canadian amateur teams may not have won many world championships in the postwar period, but Canadians could take comfort that the country still produced the best players in the world, on display in the NHL and on the CBC. The CBC contributed to this mythic delusion that hockey was Canada, and Canada was hockey, while at the same time showing American football against the CFL.

⁶⁷ Canada, *Task Force Report on Sport*, 22.

⁶⁸ Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 101-3.

To demonstrate how seriously the federal government considered *The Report of the Task Force on Sports*, seven months after its release, approximately 80 percent of its fifty-eight recommendations had been acted upon.⁶⁹ Federal government spending on sport increased more than five-fold in the next decade.⁷⁰ The Centre for Sport and Recreation, which offered financial and technical assistance as well as office staff for sport organizations, was established in Ottawa. To improve coaching the Coaching Association of Canada and the National Coaching Certification Program were formed. To provide greater financial support to athletes the Athlete Assistance Program was set up. *Participaction*, a successful program to encourage mass participation in sport, was launched.⁷¹ Sport Canada was created, the Canada Fitness Awards were introduced, and the Canada Games and Recreation Canada were established. *The Report of the Task Force on Sport* “fundamentally called for a new level of interest and involvement on the part of the federal government.”⁷² It was a significant step in the development of a federal government sport strategy. Two decades later, the task force report was identified as “one of the seminal documents in the history of Canadian government involvement in sport.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 60.

⁷⁰ Ostry, *The Cultural Connection*, 129.

⁷¹ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 94-5.

⁷² Broom and Baka, *Canadian Governments*, 28.

⁷³ Charles Dubin, *Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance* (Ottawa: the Queen’s Printer, 1990), 60.

5.6 Gaudaur and the Federal Government

Commissioner Jake Gaudaur met with Trudeau's Task Force on Sport three times to provide information on football's contribution to Canada. Gaudaur concluded in his *CFL Annual Report* for the 1969 season that while "Canadian football makes a substantial contribution to Canada, and interest is at an all-time high, it is with grave concern that the Canadian Football League anticipates that in the immediate future the sport for economic reasons beyond its control, may cease to exist."⁷⁴ He continued "there is no doubt that the road ahead for Canadian Football will continue to be rocky and uphill. . . it has always been this way and I anticipate that it always will because Canadian Football has been required to exist in competition with other League(s) in a bordering country with a population ten times that of Canada."⁷⁵ Gaudaur continued to meet with government officials in Ottawa and noted with enthusiasm that federal government officials were most interested in his apprehension about an NFL invasion. Gaudaur's submission to the Task Force included the observation that Canadians might disagree with federal intervention into the business of professional sport, but Gaudaur concluded that the CFL was different from other professional sports and businesses, as the majority of the teams were community-owned, and the intention was not to make a profit but "to keep the sport alive."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Jake Gaudaur, *1968 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1969, 5. As mentioned in the methodology section above, Gaudaur may have exaggerated or dramatized the situation in an effort to get team administrators to support his intentions to seek government support.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁶ Gaudaur, *1970 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1971, 6.

Gaudaur was passionate about saving the league and pursued every angle at the federal level in search of support. Apart from his submissions to the Task Force, Gaudaur also contacted the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC) seeking help to stop cable companies from showing blacked-out CFL games. Unlike the NFL, the CFL, with low levels of media revenue, relied on ticket sales for the majority of revenue. It was not uncommon for as much as 80 percent of revenue to be obtained from ticket sales.⁷⁷

Home football games were blacked out locally to force people who wanted to see a game to buy a ticket. However, cable operators would often televise the national feed locally, allowing people to stay at home and watch the game for free instead of travelling to a stadium and purchasing a ticket. Gaudaur details in his *Annual Report* for the 1969 season how, during one Ottawa home game, 63 percent of televisions were tuned to the football game when it was supposed to be blacked out.⁷⁸ Led by Canadian all-star quarterback Russ Jackson, the team was in first place, but attendance was still falling because so many were watching games at home on television. Despite winning the Grey Cup that year, the Ottawa team lost money.⁷⁹ Gaudaur met with John Munro and with members of the CRTC to express his concerns. The CRTC responded by upholding the cable blackout of CFL games that Gaudaur sought.⁸⁰ Eventually the government made the blacking-out of CFL games a condition of operating a cable license in Canada. Years later Gaudaur suggested that this federal government intervention had actually saved the

⁷⁷ Jake Gaudaur, *1970 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1971, 269.

⁷⁸ Gaudaur, *1969 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1970, Exhibit B, page 2.

⁷⁹ O'Brien, "Is Canadian Football Dying?" 8-9.

⁸⁰ Gaudaur, *1970 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1971, 275.

league.⁸¹ The league's financial situation was so fragile, and profits so dependent on ticket sales, that cable broadcasting, if it had been allowed to continue, could have severely damaged league revenues. Gaudaur had won an important battle by convincing the federal government to come to the rescue.

In addition to lobbying the CRTC, Gaudaur submitted a brief to the Economic Council of Canada. The Commissioner argued that, despite high television ratings and the support of the government's *Task Force Report*, the CFL was still in danger of collapsing.⁸² The new major league baseball team in Montreal had attracted a following, detracting from fan support for the Alouettes, and Gaudaur was actively searching for a new owner for the Montreal franchise. Teams in larger markets such as Montreal and Ottawa required equalization money from the league for survival as did small market and perennial money losers in Winnipeg, Saskatchewan and Edmonton.⁸³

American leagues were considering both Toronto and Montreal as possible expansion sites and the appetite for American football was growing with the help of the Canadian public broadcaster televising games even though the CBC had as its mandate the fostering of national unity. According to the new Broadcasting Act, Canadian Broadcasting was to "safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and

⁸¹ This was the next significant intervention by the federal government after forcing the CBC to air the 1962 Grey Cup game. See Jake Gaudaur, *1979 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1980, 4.

⁸² Canada. Health and Welfare Canada. Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714, March 18, 1974, Jake Gaudaur, "Submission to The Economic Council of Canada," September 30, 1969, 5, available at Queen's University Stauffer Library.

⁸³ Dan Wilson and J. Friesen, "Argo's Jump to NFL in 1974?" *B.C. Sports Magazine*, November 27, 1973, 6.

economic fabric of Canada.” The Act contained a clause that read “[t]he national broadcasting service (the CBC) should . . . contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity.”⁸⁴ Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh said the clause was “perhaps the most important feature of the CBC’s mandate.”⁸⁵ Yet the CBC continued to show American football against CFL games.

In a letter, Allan McEachern, president of the CFL, blasted the president of the CBC, George Davidson, for “stabbing the CFL in the back” by broadcasting NFL games and not blacking them out in markets where the CFL was playing.⁸⁶ The CBC continued to air NFL games, despite an internal memo from Arthur Laird, director of research for CBC, which revealed that CFL football attracted 50 to 300 percent more viewers than NFL football.⁸⁷ These high ratings for the CFL are surprising considering that many CFL games were only televised regionally, meaning that games involving teams from the west were only shown in western Canada, while games involving eastern teams were aired in eastern Canada. Furthermore, local blackouts prevented fans from watching their team playing home games. If the Toronto Argonauts were playing against their archrivals the Hamilton Tiger Cats, the game would not be televised in either city. But football fans in either city could watch an NFL game on CBC instead. The CBC estimated that blackouts

⁸⁴ Canada, *Broadcasting Act* (Ottawa: The Queen’s Printer, 1968), 3-4.

⁸⁵ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*. 27th Canadian Parliament, 2nd Session, Vol. 4 (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, November 1, 1967), 3755.

⁸⁶ LAC, Programming – Sports Broadcast – Football – Rights, RG41-A-IV-2-c. Vol. 222, File Pt. 1, 11-22-5, Allan McEachern, letter from President of CFL to George Davidson, President of CBC, January 23, 1968.

⁸⁷ LAC, Programming – Sports Broadcast – Football – Rights, RG41-A-IV-2-c. Vol. 222, File Pt. 1, 11-22-5, Arthur Laird, internal CBC Memo from CBC Director of Research, September 16, 1968.

cost the broadcasters between 3.5 and 29 percent of its viewing audience depending on the size of the market.⁸⁸ Even with this reduced potential audience, almost two million Canadians were watching CFL games on television with playoffs and the Grey Cup game dramatically increasing those numbers.⁸⁹

Despite large viewership, CTV obtained the 1969 rights to CFL football for slightly more than one million dollars.⁹⁰ In contrast, the American Football League, a league which also had nine teams, had a broadcasting contract with NBC that provided each team with one million dollars, while CBS paid one-and-a-half times more money to each NFL team.⁹¹ Broadcasting revenue supplied, on average, just 12 percent of a CFL team's budget, which was not enough revenue to keep the league afloat.⁹² Canadian broadcasters paid so little for the television rights that it was not uncommon for the CFL to earn more revenue from broadcasting agreements with American networks.⁹³ There were just two Canadian networks, and neither CTV nor CBC felt the need to bid competitively against one another, so they banded together to artificially deflate the value of broadcasting

⁸⁸ LAC, Programming - Sports – Football, 1965-1969, RG41-B-II-4. Vol. 738, File Part 1, CBC internal memo on Blackouts, October 29, 1968.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ LAC, Programming – Sports Broadcast – Football – Rights, RG41-A-IV-2-c, Vol. 222, File Pt. 1, 11-22-5 (pt. 12).

⁹¹ Steve Silverman, "The 'Other' League," *Pro Football Weekly*, November 7, 1994, 3; John Vrooman, "The Economic Structure of the NFL," in *The Economics of the National Football League: The State of the Art*, ed. Kevin G Quinn (New York: Springer, 2012), 12.

⁹² Ian Rodger, "Canadian Football for US?" *Financial Post*, October 5, 1968, 1-2.

⁹³ Creighton, "It's Time to Bring back Canadian football," 62.

rights.⁹⁴ In 1969, Gaudaur met with officials from the federal government to complain about collusion in the television bidding process. Many parts of the country still only received CBC signals and could not watch CFL football unless it was carried by the CBC. Eventually, after Gaudaur complained to federal officials, fees paid for the television rights started to climb and they soon increased by 25 percent a year, while previous increments had been on average 6 percent per year.⁹⁵

Gaudaur was not finished lobbying the federal government. He met with representatives from the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who were examining the Reserve Clause in professional sport.⁹⁶ His submission to the department regarding the Competition Act admitted that in Canadian professional football there was a restriction on free enterprise, but “the restrictions are necessary in order to preserve Canadian football as we know it.” He continued “[i]f special treatment is necessary in order to maintain this system of operation, then such is respectfully requested.”⁹⁷ He received it.

Commissioner Gaudaur had effectively lobbied federal government officials, the Minister of Health and Welfare, members of the Task Force on Sport, the CRTC, the Economic Council of Canada, and the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. He fought passionately to save the Canadian Football League and had succeeded in

⁹⁴ LAC, Football Rights. MG26-N3. Vol. 252, File 736.5, 1965, Ted Workman, “The Football Television Story,” August 23, 1965; Coleman, “CFL Football,” 6.

⁹⁵ LAC, Cabinet Documents, RG 41, Vol. 222 11-2-5; Jake Gaudaur, *1974 Canadian Football Annual Report*, 1975, 31-4.

⁹⁶ The reserve clause was viewed as a restriction on free enterprise as it prevents players from moving from one team to another after a contract’s expiration.

⁹⁷ Gaudaur, *1971 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1972, 3-4.

gaining the support of the federal government. For more than a century Canadian football had been used to aid in the construction of a unique but fragile national identity. It had become a component of life in smaller communities and larger centres across the country. Now, like so much of Canadian culture, the CFL appeared to be vulnerable to American commercial interests.

The state had intervened before in cultural concerns involving publishing, broadcasting, and communication. Professional sport was, in theory, a business to be left to market forces. While the state, in certain circumstances, might express interest in business, prior to 1960, sport had been viewed as a trivial pursuit, not worthy of government involvement. However, a sport deemed to be representative of a nation with a struggling national identity would indeed be worthy of federal government intervention during a period of peak nationalism. The CBC was undermining the importance of the CFL by televising NFL football from coast-to-coast-to-coast on the national public broadcaster. Baseball, basketball and hockey from the United States were followed by Canadians in a media saturated with American information. Many Canadian sports fans were learning that professional sport at the highest level emanated from the United States.

5.7 The NFL Invasion of Canada

In 1969 representatives from Toronto and Montreal were actively pursuing NFL franchises. In his Annual Report, Gaudaur identified the main challenge to the CFL as an American invasion. “Canadian football has had to live daily with the threat of the establishment of US franchises in Canada, and Canadians deprived of any Canadian football might trigger such a move by clamouring for some football teams, even if

American, with which they could identify on television.”⁹⁸ He acknowledged the challenges of American proximity when he said “[t]he CFL is in a very real sense reflecting the problems of Canada in retaining an autonomous identity while having to exist next door to the US.”⁹⁹

In an article for *Canadian Dimension*, academic Bruce Kidd lamented the Americanization of Canadian football. Arguing that sport was important to Canadian identity and Canadian communities, he asked “[c]an Canada really be Canada without the Grey Cup?” He predicted that the CFL would fold if an NFL team came to Canada and concluded his article by grouping CFL football with other iconic national symbols asking “With the Grey Cup gone (the railways and the national broadcasting network having become obsolete) what’s going to hold East and West together?”¹⁰⁰ Here Kidd was summoning references to the Laurentian Thesis and the east-west axis as a defining feature of Canadian nationalism.

Even before Kidd had written his lament, the federal government was asking the same questions about the future of Canadian professional football. After a meeting with Gaudaur, Minister of National Health and Welfare John Munro took up the issue. On July 29, 1969, the Cabinet Committee on External Policy and Defence, after discussing a memorandum from Munro, recommended that the Canadian Ambassador in Washington

⁹⁸ Gaudaur, *1969 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1970, 5-6. Gaudaur often used the word “threat” possibly in order to dramatize the situation and to promote his agenda by positioning the CFL as in need of assistance.

⁹⁹ Jamie Swift, “Fumble,” *This Magazine*, December 1981/January 1982, 35.

¹⁰⁰ Kidd, “Continentalization: Football,” 50.

ascertain the NFL's expansion plans, and requested Munro's memorandum be discussed at Cabinet level "at the earliest opportunity."¹⁰¹

Munro produced a report entitled *Problems Facing the Canadian Football League and its Future*. The report stated that the main threat to the League was thought to be the possibility that the NFL would move into Toronto and Montreal, which would result in the demise of the CFL and the loss of the "nation-knitting" ability of the league. In a 1968 meeting, Rozelle had mentioned Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa as potential cities for NFL franchises.¹⁰² In his report, Munro stressed the "significance of this outcome on the national unity of Canada." Munro commented on the importance of Canadian football's century-old tradition and lamented that the collapse of the league would mean fewer job opportunities for Canadian players, but more importantly, would result in the loss of the Grey Cup, "one of the great binding forces of Canada."¹⁰³ Munro felt the federal government should become more involved in this area of Canadian culture, and compared the situation in football to the *Reader's Digest* and *Time* magazine problem, where the government had acted to help the Canadian magazine industry survive American competition.

In his brief, Munro outlined six courses of action for the federal government: 1) The Canadian Department of External Affairs could be asked to communicate to the US State Department its concern and then the US State Department could express this

¹⁰¹ LAC, Cabinet Documents, RG2, Privy Council Office, Box 6352, 833/1969, notice signed by H.H. Wright, Secretary Cabinet Committees on External Policy and Defence, July 30, 1969.

¹⁰² Gaudaur, *1970 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1971, 341.

¹⁰³ LAC, Cabinet Conclusions, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6340, John Munro, "Problems facing the Canadian Football League and its future," meeting date: 1969/07/31.

concern to the NFL Commissioner 2) The Canadian Embassy in Washington could consider ways of effectively reflecting the fact that the Canadian Government would look with disfavour on the possibility of AFL or NFL franchises being awarded to Canadian cities. It could also communicate the federal government's position to members of Congress who were concerned with US-Canada relations 3) A public statement from the Minister of National Health and Welfare could be made stating the official government policy that Canadian football is a national cultural resource. In addition, the statement could outline how the government would view American penetration as wrong and deal with it in a fashion similar to the threat of American ownership of Canadian newspapers 4) The Minister of National Health and Welfare could discuss government policy on NFL expansion into Canada with Montreal Mayor Drapeau 5) The Minister of National Health and Welfare could look at the legal position of the "reserve clause" and the implications that might flow from federal government action with respect to football¹⁰⁴ 6) The federal government could meet with the CRTC to suggest that television stations not be allowed to carry games featuring foreign football teams.¹⁰⁵

The brief suggested unprecedented government intervention into protecting a professional sport. Munro wanted Edgar Ritchie, Canadian Ambassador to the United States, to discuss this concern with American authorities, but the ambassador did not think any meaningful results would follow. The Cabinet agreed that these concerns about the League should be referred to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Cultural

¹⁰⁴ The government may have been exploring the idea of preventing Canadian players from signing with an American-based team.

¹⁰⁵ LAC, Cabinet Conclusions, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6340, John Munro, "Problems facing the Canadian Football League and its future."

Affairs. Within a week, a memo from Prime Minister Trudeau referred to a bill entitled *Sports Legislation*, assigned to National Health and Welfare, to be drawn up for the 1970-71 session of Parliament.¹⁰⁶

This issue soon made its way into the House of Commons. Opposition MP Lincoln Alexander represented Hamilton, hometown of the Tiger-Cats and both Munro and Gaudaur. Alexander stated that an NFL team in Canada “would adversely affect Canadian football and the Grey Cup classic.” He continued “I think it is sufficiently important that the government be apprised of the concern of many people in Canada who are football fans and would not like to see the Grey Cup Classic, which is part of our heritage, unnecessarily interfered with by a United States football franchise which would probably ruin it.”¹⁰⁷

Montreal had evolved into a truly cosmopolitan metropolis. As the most populous city in Canada, it was the perfect site for a new NFL franchise. Its downtown was flourishing, a modern subway was finished, a new professional baseball team was playing, and the business community was growing. Leading citizens wanted Montreal to be seen as a major international city. Mayor Drapeau felt that an American NFL team was more suitable for the dynamic city of Montreal than a CFL team. Many agreed with him.

Gaudaur persuaded former Ottawa Rough Rider owner Sam Berger to purchase the money-leaking Montreal team in 1969. The arrival of the Montreal Expos that year and

¹⁰⁶ LAC, Cabinet Documents 770-69 RG2 2006-1062, Vol. 6461, Box 6, File 136-75, dated July 21, 1969.

¹⁰⁷ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*. 28th Canadian Parliament, 2nd Session, Vol. 116 (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, May 29, 1970), 7486.

talk of an NFL team did not help the CFL team's bottom line. The French-English divide was growing in the province of Quebec and also among football supporters. Surveys carried out over the next few years indicated that English-speaking supporters, making up about two-thirds of the Alouette fan-base, did not support an NFL team, but French-speaking fans did.¹⁰⁸ Supporters of Canadian football had worked endlessly to attach the game to the nation. With French-Canadian nationalism and separatist sentiment growing in Quebec, a sport tied to Canada was much less appealing. The Montreal CFL team was in serious trouble. Berger felt that Canadians' inferiority complex resulted in a demand for "big-league" football featuring American-based teams.¹⁰⁹ Gaudaur agreed that Canadians suffered from an inferiority complex. He wrote:

Living next door to a country that provides the vast majority of movies and television programs we watch, puts men on the moon etc... the Canadian when comparing any product Canadian or American, automatically assumes that the American product is better. In the case of professional football Canadians are now being exposed via both CBC and the three US networks to an overwhelming exposure of US football and their attendances of 60-100,000 per game, it is possible

¹⁰⁸ Jim Proudfoot, "Montreal Fans Okay U.S. Team," *Toronto Star*, November 29, 1972, 26; The *Montreal Star* cites a survey from *Le Journal de Montreal* suggesting 95 percent of French-speaking football fans want an NFL team for Montreal. See John Robertson, "CFL Stamped Minor League," *Montreal Star*, April 4, 1974, C1.

¹⁰⁹ Proudfoot, "Montreal Fans Okay U.S. Team," 26

that more and more Canadians will use this criterion to compare the CFL and NFL... fewer and fewer will regard the CFL as “big time.”¹¹⁰

Gaudaur believed that baseball and hockey received both more attention in the Montreal media and support from the Montreal fans because those leagues featured American-based teams.¹¹¹

In the April 1970 Quebec provincial election, the first election for the Parti Québécois, the PQ earned 23 percent of the vote. Quebec separatism was now a tangible threat. That same year Montreal was awarded the 1976 Olympic Summer Games, and the right, with government support, to spend millions of dollars to build facilities for the Games, including a massive stadium to be used for Track and Field competitions and the Opening and Closing ceremonies. This venue could also be used to host a football team in either an American or Canadian professional league.

Gaudaur met with NFL Commissioner Rozelle, who confirmed that Montreal was actively pursuing an NFL franchise. The two commissioners agreed that an NFL franchise in Canada would mean the end of the CFL and Rozelle promised that he would not allow this to happen in the foreseeable future. Gaudaur asked Rozelle to agree to a confidential arrangement that would prevent NFL teams from playing games within 125 miles of any Canadian city with a team.¹¹² While Rozelle would not formally agree to the arrangement, it must have made an impression on him. In the 1960s, there had been seven

¹¹⁰ Gaudaur, *1971 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1972, 8; Cosentino, *A Passing Game*, 49.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Gaudaur, *1969 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1970, 2.

NFL exhibition games played in Canada, including two in Montreal in 1969, when city lobbyists were attempting to prove that the city was worthy of an NFL franchise. After Gaudaur's meeting with Rozelle, the practice stopped for almost two decades.

Gaudaur lobbied federal government officials and was successful in having them inform Montreal Mayor Drapeau that the government did not support an NFL team being established in Canada.¹¹³ In 1970, Gaudaur met with Rozelle again, informing him that the federal government would intervene to prevent an NFL invasion, as the Canadian government was concerned about the sensitive area of American economic and cultural domination.¹¹⁴

5.8 The CFL Invasion of America

In August of 1971, the *Globe and Mail* newspaper reported that leaders from the city of Toronto were interested in building a 50,000 seat stadium, similar to the stadium being planned for Montreal.¹¹⁵ The Toronto Argonaut CFL team had just signed six American superstars and rumours of the city getting an NFL franchise were growing.¹¹⁶ Argonaut owner John Bassett was upset that he had to contribute so much money to the

¹¹³ Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714, Speech to Rotary club of Regina, February 21, 1974, 10.

¹¹⁴ Gaudaur, *1970 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1971, 5.

¹¹⁵ "Metro leaders considering 50,000-seat stadium on surplus land at Downsview," *Globe and Mail*, August 18, 1971, 26.

¹¹⁶ Jack Batten, "Will the Canadian Football League Survive?" *Maclean's*, October 1972, 37.

CFL in equalization payments to keep weaker western teams afloat.¹¹⁷ An analysis of League equalization payments from 1968 to 1971 reveals that indeed Toronto was supporting not just the western-based teams, but also Montreal and Ottawa. The Toronto team had supplied 61 percent of all revenue into the equalization fund, with the other 39 percent coming from western-based teams. Western teams, comprising 56 percent of the league, were withdrawing 58 percent of the equalization revenue.¹¹⁸ Rumours were rampant that Bassett would simply move his team of American superstars to the NFL. Both Saskatchewan and Winnipeg were in financial distress and, if one team folded, it was thought that Bassett would take his team south.¹¹⁹ In Gaudaur's report following the 1971 season, he wrote, "[t]oday [the league] is fighting once again for survival. It needs help."¹²⁰ For help he would continue to turn to the Canadian federal government.

Certain Canadian cities expressed interest in an NFL franchise, but the NFL was carefully controlling its expansion plans to increase franchise values. There was also interest from numerous American locations in a CFL franchise. Chicago, Indianapolis, Detroit, San Antonio, Georgia, Tampa, Portland, and even Mexico City had applied for CFL expansion teams. In addition, two inquiries from New York were received, one from Canadian singer Paul Anka and one from millionaire Robert Schmertz, who would eventually own the New England Whaler hockey team and the Boston Celtic basketball

¹¹⁷ Wilson and Friesen, "Argos Jump," 6.

¹¹⁸ This information is found in the league annual reports available in the Canadian football archives.

¹¹⁹ Wilson and Friesen, "Argos Jump," 6.

¹²⁰ Gaudaur, *1971 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1972, 5.

team.¹²¹ Argo owner Bassett supported Schmertz's interest in a CFL team for Yankee Stadium in New York City. Schmertz's was a serious application, accompanied by letters of support from the mayor of New York City as well as other prominent citizens.¹²² Just as the National Hockey League had expanded to the United States in pursuit of greater profits in the 1920s and again in 1967, there were those in Canada who felt that southern expansion would be lucrative for the only all-Canadian professional sporting league.

US expansion might mitigate another problem the CFL faced. Rather than wait for Drapeau to bring an NFL team to the new stadium in Montreal and destroy the CFL, Bassett wanted to bring in four new American teams and revitalize the league with revenue from expansion, and American radio and television rights fees.¹²³ With the addition of teams in American cities such as New York, Chicago, and Detroit, the CFL would be seen as a world-class league, and Bassett felt that that would be enough to entice Montreal and Vancouver into staying in the league.¹²⁴

However, there were concerns that including American-based teams would lead to an erosion of the distinctiveness of Canadian football. In his year-end Annual Report, Gaudaur expressed several concerns about US expansion.¹²⁵ It was a given that the new American-based CFL teams would not adhere to the Canadian player quotas, resulting in

¹²¹ Ibid., 11; Goodman, *Huddling Up*, 134; Greg Fulton, *A History of Expansion*, Unpublished manuscript, 1996 available in the Canadian football archives.

¹²² Fulton, *A History of Expansion*.

¹²³ Siggins, *Bassett*, 121.

¹²⁴ Goodman, *Huddling Up*, 137.

¹²⁵ Jake Gaudaur, *1971 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1972, 11.

fewer jobs for Canadian players. This might jeopardize the future of the Canadian content rule. In addition, smaller markets, particularly those in the west, might lose franchises to larger American cities, similar to what had happened in the 1920s with NHL expansion.

In an interview, Gaudaur explained that “[i]n theory it sounds great to expand to the US. However, it’s not an anti-American feeling, but we feel certain that, if we let in the bigger American cities, some of the Canadian cities would drop by the wayside.”¹²⁶

Gaudaur was concerned that US expansion might result in the eventual merging of the CFL with the NFL and that the Grey Cup would disappear. The chief concern was the loss of both the CFL and the Grey Cup as important national traditions. Another fear was that a move into the United States might jeopardize the federal government support that the league had enjoyed and that Gaudaur felt was needed for the league to survive.¹²⁷

Perhaps most importantly, if the CFL moved into the United States, the NFL might reciprocate and move into Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Public support was clearly not in favour of American expansion. A Gallup poll revealed that 67 percent of Canadians were opposed to American teams participating in the Canadian Football League.¹²⁸

Gaudaur had successfully lobbied government officials behind the scenes in the past and was confident that he would have the support of the Trudeau government. The commissioner’s view was that government intervention into professional football was no

¹²⁶ Swift, “Fumble,” 35.

¹²⁷ Gaudaur, *1971 Canadian Football League Annual Report*. 1972, 8.

¹²⁸ Canadian Gallup Poll #357, January 1973, Accessed January 11, 2016. <http://odesi2.scholarsportal.info/webview/index/en/Odesi>.

different than government intervention into the economy, communications, transportation or any form of culture. The Trudeau government had intervened in culture on many occasions and had attempted to Canadianize the economy and slow continental integration. One observer noted that “[i]n one generation, apparently almost by accident, Canada changed from a country in which the federal government’s cultural role was severely limited to a country in which that role is pervasive.”¹²⁹ Both Ostry and Edwardson note that there was little resistance to this level of federal government intervention in the area of culture.¹³⁰ “Our football league is a very close reflection of Canada’s problem as a nation in holding on to its identity and its autonomy in the face of a stronger force to the south,” Gaudaur was quoted as saying in an interview.¹³¹

NFL expansion into Canada or CFL expansion into the United States was being actively pursued and both were expected to result in the demise of a Canadian institution. Football, argued Montreal owner Sam Berger, was a more powerful element of national unity than hockey. Hockey was local with teams representing cities, but football was regional, with teams representing regions or entire provinces. The Grey Cup had always been an east-west affair, and in his opinion this encouraged every Canadian to feel a part of the game.¹³² The Grey Cup in particular, was often glorified as much more than a football game, seen as “a National Institution, . . . one of the things that binds this great

¹²⁹ Ostry, *The Cultural Connection*, xi.

¹³⁰ Ibid.; Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 218.

¹³¹ Batten, “Will the Canadian Football League Survive?” 94.

¹³² McRae, “Let Us Now Praise,” 14.

nation together.”¹³³ Donald McNaughton, President of Schenley, a league sponsor, argued for the importance of the CFL when he said “the NHL is gone as a purely national Canadian activity. Football is all that’s left, the one thing that gets us thinking east-to-west in this country instead of north-to-south. . . . During Grey Cup week that thinking hits a terrific peak. It keeps us conscious of being Canadians.”¹³⁴ Berger echoed this sentiment when he remarked “The Grey Cup and the league are national institutions that make us conscious of staying a nation.”¹³⁵ A player for the potentially US-bound Toronto Argonauts used a tired cliché when he remarked “if we lose the CFL, it’d be like losing a railroad that links the country together.”¹³⁶

Thanks to television, professional sport was exploding in North America. A new basketball league had commenced operations in 1967, and in 1971 the creation of a new professional hockey league, the World Hockey Association, was announced. In the United States professional football was surpassing college football in popularity and was quickly becoming the major pro sport. Tampa, Memphis, Phoenix and Seattle had recently applied for NFL franchises.

The CFL formed a committee to closely examine the issue of expansion.¹³⁷ Bassett was concerned about an NFL team playing in the new stadium being built in Montreal and was adamant that New York and at least one other US-based franchise be admitted to

¹³³ George Bain, “More notes from Tranna,” *Globe and Mail*, November 27, 1970, 6.

¹³⁴ Batten, “Will the Canadian Football League Survive?” 36.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Fulton, “A History of Expansion.”

save the CFL. He had the support of a majority of teams, including all the teams in the east as well as Vancouver in the west.¹³⁸ The smaller community-owned teams on the prairies were opposed, feeling that smaller markets would lose franchises to larger American markets. Ottawa owner David Loeb was one who felt US expansion could prevent the NFL from coming to Canada and keep a new league from forming with Canadian and US-based teams.¹³⁹

The most serious expansion application was still from New Yorker Schmertz. His promise of a \$2 million expansion fee would help strengthen the fragile economic situation the league was presently facing.¹⁴⁰ An emergency meeting was held in Winnipeg on November 16, where Bassett pitched his idea. He proposed to forward the motion of American expansion at the next league meeting on December 1. Officials from the four eastern-based teams threatened to withdraw from the CFL and set up a new league with prospective owner Schmertz and other American-based teams if the application was denied. The CFL was facing a serious revolt from within. Schmertz threatened to place a team in this new league in Montreal's new stadium.¹⁴¹ Commissioner Gaudaur knew where to turn to extinguish this crisis.

¹³⁸ "Munro blocks bid," *Toronto Star*, November 22, 1972, A1; Jack Sullivan, *The Grey Cup Story* (Toronto: Pagurian Press, 1974), 193.

¹³⁹ "Munro blocks bid," *Toronto Star*, A1.

¹⁴⁰ LAC, Office of the Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare – Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch – Sports – Football, 1974/03-1975/01, RG29, Vol. 1571, File Part 5 32, speech by Sam Berger, April 29, 1974.

¹⁴¹ Dick Beddoes, "Munro fights Americanization of CFL," *Globe and Mail*, November 20, 1972, S1.

The weekend after the emergency meeting, Minister John Munro attended the CFL playoff football game in his hometown of Hamilton. At halftime he held an impromptu press conference and stated “[e]xpansion to the States would represent an erosion of Canadianism. . . The Government must act to stop such a possibility.”¹⁴² Munro felt that American expansion would result in the elimination of all but three or four Canadian cities from the league as well as the loss of the Grey Cup game.¹⁴³ Munro offered to meet with CFL officials to see what the government could do to eliminate the need for expansion into the United States. During his interview he said “we must make representations to the US Congress to prevent the CFL from losing its Canadian identity.”¹⁴⁴

He also made threats on behalf of the government. “Any federal funds that go to build an Olympic stadium in Montreal, say, might have to carry a restriction, which could be that only Canadian teams be allowed to use the stadium for football when the Olympics are over.” The government, according to Munro, could legislate against foreign football teams, just as it banned foreign control of the Canadian media. John Munro, in a football stadium during half-time of a playoff game, was forming official federal government policy. He proposed recognizing the CFL as an important nation-building instrument, linking east and west like the railroad or the CBC. As such, the CFL would enjoy government protection. There was concern that the Americanization of the NHL

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Cosentino, *A Passing Game*, 82.

¹⁴⁴ Dick Beddoes, “Munro fights Americanization,” S1.

would be repeated in the CFL. Munro said he would be meeting with commissioner Gaudaur and would recommend expansion to Halifax, London and Quebec City.¹⁴⁵

Munro's threats made front page news across the country. Provincial governments backed the federal government, with Ontario Premier Davis suggesting that the federal government had to act to prevent the CFL's US expansion.¹⁴⁶ Less than 48 hours after his halftime impromptu press conference, Munro summoned Gaudaur and Bassett to a meeting in Ottawa where he expanded on his government-backed threats. Gaudaur explained to Munro that expansion was being contemplated to prevent a new league from forming. Munro told Gaudaur that he felt a CFL team in the US or an NFL team in Canada would kill the league, which was too important to Canada.¹⁴⁷

In a post-meeting interview, Munro said "My government is prepared to do what it can to preserve the CFL as a Canadian entity and the Grey Cup game as an instrument for national unity."¹⁴⁸ He elaborated that the federal government "would regard expansion of the NFL into Canada as something to be deplored. We will do everything we can to prevent it happening. This is Government policy."¹⁴⁹ Munro expanded on the unprecedented actions the federal government could take: immigration policy could be used to prevent players on American teams from playing in the country by withholding visas; licenses could be revoked to prevent Canadian broadcasters from televising games

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ "Davis, Munro defend our football," *Toronto Star*, November 21, 1972, 62.

¹⁴⁷ Jake Gaudaur, *1973 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1974, 111.

¹⁴⁸ "Munro blocks bid," *Toronto Star*, A1

¹⁴⁹ Jim Vipond, "CFL move into US blocked by Munro," *Globe and Mail*, November 22, 1972, 1.

featuring American teams; television sponsors on such broadcasts could lose tax exemptions. These approaches would be enacted, Munro said, to “prevent invasion of Canada by the National Football League or the expansion of the Canadian Football League into the United States. . . We will immediately explore every possible area in which we can help. . . This is the only way to preserve the Grey Cup as a Canadian tradition.”¹⁵⁰

Bassett explained to Munro that he was not proposing expansion to make money, but to save the CFL. He gave the league a life expectancy of three to five years if it did not expand to the US and asked Munro to provide funds for the league so that the east would not be providing revenue for struggling western teams.¹⁵¹ Subsidies to the CFL were not offered by the government. Munro asked Bassett to drop his motion of expansion so that the government would not be forced to act.¹⁵² At the conclusion, Bassett called it “a damned good meeting” and withdrew his motion recommending league expansion into the US.¹⁵³ Bassett’s motion was replaced by another motion to explore Canadian expansion.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Milt Dunnell, “Expansion bomb to drop on West,” *Toronto Star*, November 29, 1972, 25.

¹⁵² LAC, Office of the Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare – Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch – Sports – Football, 1974/03-1975/01, RG29, Vol. 1571, letters from David Loeb, owner of Ottawa Rough Riders, to Minister Marc Lalonde.

¹⁵³ “Munro blocks bid,” *Toronto Star*, A1.

¹⁵⁴ LAC, Office of the Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare – Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch – Sports – Football, 1974/03-1975/01, RG29, Vol. 1571, letters from David Loeb, owner of Ottawa Rough Riders, to Minister Marc Lalonde.

The government's position, articulated by Munro, was to prevent an American franchise from playing in the CFL, but equally important, to prevent a franchise in an American league from being based in Canada. Montreal was openly campaigning for a franchise in an American league. As the province of Quebec seemed to distance itself from the rest of Canada, the federal government desired to maintain connections in any form that could link Quebec to Canada, even if the connection was a football league.

Reaction to Munro's statement of federal government policy was widespread and swift. Letters in the *Toronto Star* were split. Some were outraged that the federal government would determine what type of football could be seen in Canada, lamenting that without the American-based teams, the CFL would always be a minor league.¹⁵⁵

French-Canadian nationalism was also evident in the reaction. Montreal and its new Olympic stadium were blamed for contributing to the potential collapse of the CFL. The English-French divide, it was reasoned, resulted in Quebec rejecting Canadian institutions, such as the CFL.¹⁵⁶ Bassett also blamed the west for weak community-owned teams that had become a drain on the private eastern-based teams. Strengthened economic nationalism and higher energy prices resulted in strained relations between the energy needing east and the energy rich west. Bassett complained, "Alberta sits on a sea of oil but what has it contributed to Canadian football? Not a dime. It has two community teams that have been subsidized by Toronto, Montreal and now Hamilton," even though an examination of equalization payments demonstrated that this was clearly not the

¹⁵⁵ Letters to the Editor, *Toronto Star*, November 28, 1972, 6.

¹⁵⁶ Siggins, *Bassett*, 121.

case.¹⁵⁷ Others in the media drew attention to the ironic situation of the federal government preventing the NFL from coming into Canada, while, at the same time, the federal government's public broadcaster was bringing the NFL into Canada.¹⁵⁸

Bassett and the owners of the Eastern teams made the next move. If the government did not announce CFL-saving moves in the form of subsidies by January 15, the four eastern teams would give notice to withdraw from the league. Bassett stated that this was being done to save the CFL.¹⁵⁹ A spokesperson for the federal government said there would be no federal subsidies for the CFL and also reiterated Munro's threats, stating that the government could act in the areas of taxation, immigration and telecommunications if the CFL expanded south, emphasizing that this was not just Munro's personal views but official federal government policy. Even without subsidies, the reiteration of protection for the CFL being government policy was important as Munro had just been shuffled from the Health and Welfare portfolio to Labour and therefore was no longer responsible for sport. The government spokesperson stated that if the owners of the Montreal and Toronto franchises withdrew from the CFL, other owners would take over the teams.¹⁶⁰ Government threats seemed to dissuade Bassett from leaving the CFL and his demands were dropped.

¹⁵⁷ Dunnell, "Expansion bomb," 25.

¹⁵⁸ Milt Dunnell, "Thirteenth man in the huddle," *Toronto Star*, November 23, 1972, 14

¹⁵⁹ Dunnell, "Expansion Bomb," 25. Owners of the other three eastern-based teams dispute this point. See "Report of threat to quit baffles," *Globe and Mail*, November 30, 1972, 50. Bassett is quoted as saying it is true. See Canadian Press, "Bassett fails to sway Lalonde," *Globe and Mail*, March 13, 1974, 34.

¹⁶⁰ Ken McKee, "Ottawa talks tough on football expansion," *Toronto Star*, November 29, 1972, 26.

5.9 Conclusion

The election of Pierre Trudeau, the appointment of John Munro as Minister of Health and Welfare, and the selection of Jake Gaudaur as commissioner of the CFL resulted in the federal government becoming more directly involved in Canadian football in a variety of ways including threatening to prevent American teams from joining the CFL, and Canadian teams from playing in American professional leagues.

Prime Minister Trudeau wanted to continue using culture as a counterweight to divisive forces. The definition of culture was now broad enough to include sport in this approach. Trudeau had a keen interest in sport as a participant, and his government became more involved in sport than any government previously.¹⁶¹ The *Report of the Task Force on Sport* praised the CFL and made professional sport a focus of government intervention, while legitimizing the role the federal government would play in an area that was normally under provincial and municipal jurisdiction.

As a former player and administrator with more than three decades of experience in the League, Jake Gaudaur was a fierce advocate for Canadian football. He was also a staunch nationalist and shrewd lobbyist who tirelessly pushed the government for support to save a beleaguered professional sport. He successfully lobbied federal government officials, the Minister of Health and Welfare, members of the Task Force on Sport, the CRTC, the Economic Council of Canada, and the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.¹⁶² He fought passionately to save the Canadian Football League and

¹⁶¹ Hallett, "A History," 771; Zakus, "A Genesis, 32"

¹⁶² However, while lobbying the government, Gaudaur was also spending thousands of dollars to entice American players, coaches, and media networks. Details of annual luncheons designed to acquaint

succeeded in gaining the support of the federal government. In particular, he found a powerful ally in John Munro.

Under Munro, the Trudeau government had revolutionized sport in Canada by creating a Canadian sport system designed to unite Canadians and counter Quebec separatism. The government even became involved in professional sport. Wise and Fisher refer to Munro's involvement as "probably the most significant intervention in sport in [the 20th] century," and Hallett agrees that his involvement was a key factor in the government becoming involved in sport in Canada.¹⁶³ Galasso recognized that "more changes and implementation of new policies and programs [were] made during Munro's tenure than the sum total of the preceding three ministers' contributions."¹⁶⁴

This cast of sympathetic officials in positions of power was instrumental in bringing about a paradigm shift in government policy in response to the crisis facing the league. Short-term factors resulted in a number of challenges for the CFL. A struggling franchise in Montreal, increased Canadian media coverage of the NFL, Canadian cities interested in an NFL team, and American cities interested in a CFL franchise all contributed to this crisis. Government action to curtail the crisis was consistent with the growth in state involvement in culture, and the view that popular culture including professional sport was an acceptable area for government action.

American coaches with the CFL, and information brochures produced to attract American players and broadcast networks are included in Gaudaur's annual reports as well as Cosentino, *A Passing Game*, 47.

¹⁶³ Wise and Fisher, *Canada's Sporting Heroes*, 313; Hallett, "A History," 598.

¹⁶⁴ Galasso, "Involvement," 54.

As Canadian football became more important to the country, and government intervention in the area of sport started in the 1960s, it seemed natural to move to protect the sport. In 1961 the first national sport act was passed; in 1962 the government forced the CBC to televise the Grey Cup in the national interest; in 1968 Trudeau's Task Force on Sport released its report praising the Canadian Football League; and 1972 saw the creation of the Canadian version of the "Munro Doctrine," expressing support for a Canadian professional football league. By the early 1970s, the CFL and the Grey Cup were seen as sufficiently constitutive of the nation to justify federal government support. Football helped the state consolidate its transcontinental dominion. With state action on culture to limit American influence, supporting the CFL was seen as a politically safe, logical next step. There was interest in having a Canadian-based franchise in an American league or an American-based team in the CFL, but an unprecedented response from the government stymied any such initiative.

The goal of the government's involvement in sport had shifted from the creation of national identity to using sport to unite the country. An important reason for this was the rise of Quebec separatism during the 1960s. While peak nationalism had emerged in English-speaking Canada, a French complement had developed in Quebec. The federal government could use the CFL to counter this Quebec nationalism. The government worked diligently to keep the NFL out of Montreal, and to have a team representing the province of Quebec playing in a Canadian league. This would be the government using Canadian football to further its own objectives of national unity. On the one hand, the government would act because the CFL was threatened. But on a broader level, the government was acting to protect the CFL because the Canadian nation was threatened.

The national unity crisis played a role in the emergence of the “Munro Doctrine,” and the crisis would ultimately lead to the most dramatic form of football intervention to come; the introduction of Bill C-22: An Act Respecting Canadian Professional Football.

Chapter 6: Munro Hands-off to Lalonde: 1972-1976

The federal government's second intervention into Canadian football revealed the extent to which the government would go to save the struggling league. As has been demonstrated, the 1960s and early 1970s was a period of peak nationalism in Canada, accompanied by active state intervention. The CFL, under the nationalist leadership of Jake Gaudaur, had grown to be something that was recognizably a distinctly Canadian form of culture. This chapter will trace the history of Canadian federal government involvement in Canadian professional football from 1972, when Marc Lalonde replaced John Munro as the Minister responsible for Sport, until 1976, when Lalonde was shuffled out of the portfolio. This was the federal government's third and most significant intervention into professional football, one that went so far as to threaten jail-terms for violators. That Bill C-22, known as the Football Bill, was proposed at a time of major economic upheaval in Canada demonstrates how important it was for the Trudeau government to protect a form of Canadian culture while resisting American influence.

This CFL protectionist moment must be viewed as the product of a conjunction of long-term trends and immediate circumstances. The game had grown to occupy the national territory through transportation (including the railway and later air travel) and the media (including newspapers, radio, and later television). Postwar Canadian nationalism heightened concerns about Americanization. It also brought increasing state intervention, including cultural policies that grew in scope as they became more populist. When a national sporting league that represented the nation began to struggle, the stage was set for the most significant government intervention in the area of professional sport to date. A contributing factor to this outcome was the influence of particular personalities

such as Jake Gaudaur, a superb lobbyist for the league, John Munro, a sympathetic fellow-Hamiltonian who was not hesitant to use state power to achieve nationalist ends, and Marc Lalonde, who found himself facing a controversial and emotional issue as a cabinet minister in a tenuous minority government.

Lalonde, the new Minister of Health and Welfare, seemed just as determined as Munro to save the CFL and uphold government policy concerning the protection of the CFL, and he said so shortly after taking over the portfolio.¹ Lalonde was an Oxford educated (Master of Laws), bilingual, and most importantly, federalist Quebecker. He had been special advisor to Prime Minister Pearson and then Principal Secretary to Trudeau. It was Trudeau who urged him to run for a seat in the 1972 election. When he won Trudeau appointed the rookie MP Minister of National Health and Welfare also responsible for Sport. Lalonde may have lacked experience as an elected official, but he was a seasoned veteran as a political operator.

Throughout his political career Lalonde would be closely identified with Trudeau. He would retire from politics in 1984 after Trudeau stepped down. The new minister, who had no interest in and little knowledge of Canadian football, publically expressed his support for the government policy protecting the CFL in his first press conference as the new Minister of National Health and Welfare.² Within one week of his appointment, Lalonde met with Gaudaur, outlining the government's concern regarding an NFL

¹ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*. 29th Canadian Parliament, 2nd Session, Vol. 120 (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, April 18, 1974), 1565.

² Marc Lalonde, telephone conversation with author, September 23, 2013; Ibid.

invasion of Canada and the CFL's proposed expansion into the US.³ A summary of the meeting was sent to all CFL team executives, including John Bassett, owner of the Argonauts.⁴ Gaudaur asked Lalonde to meet with the mayor of Montreal and reaffirm government policy regarding an NFL team being located in Canada. When Lalonde met with Drapeau his concern was ignored.⁵

Globe and Mail columnist George Bain felt that Lalonde was just as passionate as Munro about supporting Canadian football and the Grey Cup as important Canadian institutions. Furthermore, Bain argued, "the Government not only has the right, as the custodian of the interest of a lot of people who spend their weekend bundled in the stands or peering into the tube (and who the league-owners do not demonstrably intend to consult), but it has no end of means to make life terribly awkward for the club-owners." Finally, he argued, the owners who wanted to expand into the US would "ensure the destruction of something that is uniquely part of us."⁶

While the federal Liberals continued to work hard to build a more successful international sporting presence, domestic professional sport did not escape their gaze. The Liberals pressured the NHL to include more Canadian cities and played a role in

³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 18, 1974, 1565; Gaudaur, *1973 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1974, 111. This illustrates how important this issue was to the government, as Lalonde admitted he had no interest in football, but immediately went to work on this file.

⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 18, 1974, 1565.

⁵ Robertson, "Liberals must back," F2.

⁶ George Bain, "Rude awakenings," *Globe and Mail*, December 5, 1972, 6.

organizing the 1972 Canada–Soviet Summit Hockey Series.⁷ Such government intervention into professional hockey was ground breaking. The survival of some teams in the CFL depended on support from municipal and provincial governments for stadiums and subsidies, which was justified by similar support received by other forms of culture such as museums, symphonies or art galleries. But federal government involvement in professional sport to date had been limited to the 1962 and 1972 incidents described previously.

Nationalism and resistance to Americanizing trends continued to be a focus for the federal government. Prime Minister Trudeau’s “Third Option,” referred to by author Lawrence Martin as “perhaps Canada’s last great experiment in nationalism,” was a plan to find trade relationships for Canada that would offset the preponderant influence of the United States in these areas.⁸ The first option was status quo in Canada’s relationship with the US, the second option was intensified Americanization, and the third was less dependence on the United States, a choice that was consistent with the aspirations of contemporary Canadian nationalism.

Trudeau’s Third Option was evident in some of his government’s actions. In 1972, the CBC reported that 99 percent of the energy industry in Canada was foreign-owned. According to surveys, Canadians had become interested in wrestling back control of the

⁷ Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks, *Sport and Politics*, 59; Macintosh and Hawes, *Sport and Canadian*, 32. In addition, in 1969 a federal government task force examined the NHL’s Reserve Clause. See James Quirk and Rodney Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 206.

⁸ Martin, *Pledge of Allegiance*, 26.

economy, seeing this as a fight for Canadian sovereignty.⁹ A Gallup poll found that more than two-thirds of Canadians felt the country had enough foreign investment.¹⁰ The federal government acted. The Trudeau government attempted to Canadianize the economy and slow continental integration by establishing the Canada Development Corporation (CDC) in 1971, designed to develop and maintain Canadian-controlled companies, and the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) in 1973, set up to screen foreign acquisitions. These were efforts to find counterweights to American power, and work towards Canadian sovereignty. Cultural and economic nationalism certainly complemented each other, yet economic nationalism was more controversial because it threatened the pocketbooks of Canadians. Cultural nationalism, especially its popular variant sport nationalism, in particular support for Canadian football, was less risky politically yet offered greater symbolic dividends.

One must question why the federal Liberals would move to protect a professional sport that was reliant on American coaches and players. Certainly peak nationalism played a role. As Canadian football represented the nation and could be used for identity formation and national unity, protecting the game was protecting a significant form of Canadian culture. However, this protection must also be viewed in light of the Liberals' slim minority position as a result of the October 1972 federal election. The Liberals won one-hundred nine seats compared to the one-hundred seven won by the Conservatives. As a result the Liberals were dependent on the NDP, a democratic-socialist and nationalist party with no great love of business, for power. It had been almost fifty years since a

⁹ Resnick, *Land of Cain*, 148; Azzi, *Walter Gordon*, 161; Edwardson, "Kicking Uncle Sam," 145.

¹⁰ Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada*, 302.

government tried to govern with such a small minority, and that government had lasted less than one year. Trudeau recognized that he needed to cooperate with the NDP or risk having his government fall.

The NDP had recently become more nationalistic as a result of the influence of the left-wing Waffle movement.¹¹ In the 1972 federal election the NDP had won over many Canadian nationalists.¹² It was “a much more nationalistic period,” Lalonde recalled years later. “Canada was then a very nationalistic country,” with all the major parties, the NDP, Conservatives and Liberals, “more interested in nationalism.”¹³

Liberal House Leader Allan MacEachen met with NDP leader David Lewis prior to any measure going before the House to ensure that the Liberals had NDP support.¹⁴ As a result, the Liberals shifted to the left to maintain power and implemented some NDP proposals. Petro-Canada was established as a crown corporation by the Liberals as a condition of NDP support for the Liberal minority government.¹⁵ The NDP pressured the government into a new national oil policy and passing the Foreign Investment Review Act. NDP influence was also behind the Liberals introducing increases to old age

¹¹ John Bullen, “The Ontario Waffle and the Struggle for an Independent Socialist Canada: Conflict within the NDP,” *Canadian Historical Review* 64, no. 2 (June 1983), 215.

¹² John English, *Just Watch Me: Volume 2* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2009), 218.

¹³ Marc Lalonde, telephone conversation with author, September 23, 2013.

¹⁴ Paul Litt, *Elusive Destiny: The Political Vocation of John Napier Turner* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 173.

¹⁵ David Laycock, “Conceptual Foundations of Continuity and Change in NDP Ideology,” in *Reviving Social Democracy: the Near Death and Surprising Rise of the Federal NDP*, ed. David Laycock and Lynda Erickson (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 114.

pensions, family allowances, and corporate taxes.¹⁶ While support for the CFL was not, according to available evidence, a specific condition of the NDP propping up the Liberal minority government, it was the sort of interventionist nationalistic measure the NDP would favour.

Intervening to protect Canadian football could also be seen as a populist move to counter the negative public perception of Trudeau and the Liberal party. After a convincing win in 1968, Trudeau's Liberals had squeaked out a narrow victory in the 1972 election. Polls showed that after Trudeau's first term in office he was viewed as arrogant.¹⁷ To retain power a party needs to become sensitive to issues that can help at the polls. Protecting a popular form of Canadian popular culture would have been a strategy to endear the Prime Minister and his party to the public, and act as an antidote to the perception that Trudeau was arrogant.

6.1 The WFL Invasion of Canada

Greatly assisted by the federal government, the CFL had survived the first potential US intrusion. However, there was still concern that more such attempts lay in the future. Mayor Drapeau had been urged by the media in Montreal to attend an NFL expansion meeting.¹⁸ In the Quebec general election of October 1973, the Parti Québécois won more than 30 percent of the vote and, while it elected only six members

¹⁶ Richard Gwyn, *The Northern Magus* (Markham, ON: PaperJacks, 1981), 148-9.

¹⁷ Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 161.

¹⁸ Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714, March 18, 1974.

to the legislature, it formed the Official Opposition. Quebec separatism was still very much a concern in Canada. That same month, Gary Davidson, responsible for organizing the American Basketball Association (ABA) and the World Hockey Association (WHA), announced the formation of the World Football League (WFL). Markets without an NFL team such as Jacksonville, Birmingham, and Portland as well as larger markets that might support two professional football teams such as Detroit, Chicago and New York were awarded franchises. The New York team was owned by Robert Schmertz, whose application for a CFL team had been rejected. Gaudaur immediately met with Lalonde, informing him that this development was a serious concern of the CFL.¹⁹

Just weeks after this meeting, a Toronto-based WFL franchise, to be owned by John (Johnny) Bassett Jr., was announced. John Bassett Sr., owner of the Toronto Argonauts, had successfully resisted the establishment of a second CFL team in the Toronto market, but now welcomed an American WFL team instead.²⁰ The Argonauts, the oldest football team in North America, would be competing for the interests of football fans in Toronto. CFL administrators had enormous concerns about this new WFL franchise. The Argos had dutifully contributed to the League's equalization fund for many years. If the new Toronto WFL team affected the Argos' bottom line it would be felt by every CFL team. More importantly, a successful American football team in Canada could open the door for NFL teams in Montreal, Vancouver, and even Toronto if the WFL experiment failed.

¹⁹ Gaudaur, *1973 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1974, 113.

²⁰ In the spring of 1974, a cheque for \$25,000 was presented to the CFL head office as a deposit on a second CFL team in Toronto but Bassett refused to relinquish his territorial rights. Bob Pennington, "Two CFL teams in Toronto?" *Sports International*, September 1974, 11.

The WFL included very wealthy owners with a plan to compete with the NFL by offering higher salaries that could lure many players from both the CFL and the NFL. Johnny Bassett contacted administrators with both the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, offering them first 25 percent and eventually 35 percent of his WFL team, and the Ottawa Rough Riders, offering them 10 percent of the Toronto WFL team. In addition, he offered rights to a WFL franchise for those cities as he had been granted WFL territorial rights for all of Canada. If the CFL collapsed, now seen as a growing possibility, Hamilton and Ottawa would have the opportunity to have a team in the WFL.²¹

Bassett's offer was initially well received by the Hamilton Tiger-Cat management.²² When news of this offer reached Gaudaur, he requested a meeting with the Hamilton administration. After an impassioned speech, where one witness stated that Gaudaur "hit the guys right in their patriotism," the members of the Tiger-Cat administration voted against supporting the WFL.²³ Ottawa owner David Loeb fell in line with Hamilton President Ralph Sazio in rejecting Bassett's WFL offer. Gaudaur would attempt to capitalize on nationalist sentiments in the population generally and in a government that was sensitive to the political implication of public opinion.

Team officials from the western CFL teams began a movement to rescind John Bassett Sr.'s ownership of the Argo franchise, arguing it was a blatant conflict of interest

²¹ Jim Coleman, "CFL May Be Losing a Good Man," *Calgary Herald*, February, 22, 1974, 28.

²² Ted Blackman, "Sazio provides another view about Bassett-WFL situation," *Montreal Gazette*, March 7, 1974, 31.

²³ Dick Beddoes, "By Dick Beddoes," *Globe and Mail*, March 7, 1974, 40.

for one family to own teams in competing leagues.²⁴ The government was not as concerned about a conflict of interest as it was about the future of the fragile Canadian league. In January of 1974, Minister Marc Lalonde stated that he would raise the issue with his colleagues, meaning that the WFL would be discussed at Cabinet.²⁵ John Munro, although not directly involved in this issue as he was now in the Labour portfolio, was still passionate about the matter. Munro advised Gaudaur to have executives from each CFL team meet with provincial and federal politicians, informing them of the consequences should an American league establish a presence in Canada. Munro told Gaudaur that he should inform more cabinet members of the issue, and provided a list of eight MPs to lobby, advising Gaudaur to get this done before the next cabinet meeting scheduled for February 12.²⁶

Officials from the community-owned western teams met with Lalonde to express concern about the WFL.²⁷ Gaudaur feared a backlash might accompany more federal government intervention, but felt government action was justified because, unlike professional baseball and hockey, the CFL was an all-Canadian league with teams and players from Canada. Certainly the federal government would have to act to save the Grey Cup, an important national cultural institution. Gaudaur felt the government had taken credit for preventing CFL expansion into the United States, so now it should stand

²⁴ Siggins, *Bassett*, 231.

²⁵ Gaudaur, *1973 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1974, 113.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁷ Sullivan, *The Grey Cup Story*, 199.

up to prevent American expansion into Canada. If the WFL succeeded in Toronto, Gaudaur predicted that the CFL would need to merge with an American league to stay alive. “I would rather see the CFL and its teams stay alive in some form,” he wrote, “than sink slowly or rapidly into the sea, waving a Canadian flag.”²⁸

Backed by massive financing, situated in major American cities, and featuring quality players, the WFL was perceived by the government to be a threat to the CFL, and consequently a threat to Canadian culture in general. The government’s view was that the CFL, as an institution that reflected Canadian culture, was unique and worth fighting for.²⁹

After he had returned from the Commonwealth Games in February, Lalonde met with Gaudaur.³⁰ Lalonde was convinced that the CFL was struggling and a WFL team competing for attention might kill the league.³¹ Furthermore, if a WFL team was allowed into Canada, the NFL, interested in a Canadian franchise for some time, might soon follow. Montreal and Vancouver would be potential homes for an expansion NFL team and there was a danger that Canadians, accustomed to watching the NFL on cable and the CBC, would gladly watch the NFL games live. Toronto Argonaut games were sold out and blacked out, so they were not shown locally on television. This meant that football

²⁸ Gaudaur, *1973 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1974, 118.

²⁹ Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714, Lalonde, “Speech,” 11-3.

³⁰ Canada would host the next Games so it was important that Lalonde be in attendance.

³¹ Marc Lalonde, telephone conversation with author, September 23, 2013.

fans, denied seeing the Argonaut CFL game in person or on television, simply stayed at home and watched the NFL on CBC.

Gaudaur believed

we can prove using game statistics as the criterion we play a more entertaining game. . . [but] there continues to be a clear manifestation of a general Canadian inferiority complex which in the case of football results in many Canadians, particularly in the larger cities, using affluence as the criterion and concluding that the NFL is the only “big time” football.³²

The media contributed to this colonial outlook with their tendency to see American sport as “major league.” In addition, the NFL’s adroit use of television, which created more excitement around the televised game than the live event, had increased its Canadian audience.

The WFL offered Toronto an opportunity to be grouped with world-class destinations such as New York, Los Angeles and Hawaii. Gaudaur agreed with Lalonde that a WFL team in Canada would trigger reactions that would quickly kill the CFL. He was adamant that “Canadian football should be preserved as an All-Canadian entity” and argued that there was “no alternative but to resort to whatever legal means or remedies that are available to fight against an American pro football invasion of CFL franchise areas.”³³

³² Gaudaur, *1973 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1974, 11.

³³ *Ibid.*, 11.

On February 12, Cabinet granted the Minister of Health and Welfare permission to say publicly that the government viewed with disfavour the expansion of the WFL into Canada. On February 14, ministers responsible for Sport in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba sent a telegram to Lalonde pleading for federal government intervention to save the CFL. Manitoba NDP MLA Stanley Knowles also sent a letter to Lalonde, asking the Minister to take a stand against the WFL.³⁴ Alberta Cabinet Minister Don Getty and Premier Peter Lougheed, both former Canadian professional football players, expressed concern to federal government officials at a national energy conference.³⁵ Senator Keith Davey, a former commissioner of the CFL, and a chief Liberal organizer and Senator, was also passionate about saving Canadian football. He became an influential advisor to the government on this issue, providing Lalonde with background information.³⁶

Some of the influential men lobbying for government support, such as Peter Lougheed and Don Getty, were ex-football players, successful businessmen and elected politicians. Don Getty's teammate, Normie Kwong, another successful businessmen, eventually was named Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Another teammate, Steve Paproski, was one of the only Conservatives to vote for the Bill. Ontario Premier Bill Davis, also a supporter of the Bill, played football in university and had two teammates in his provincial cabinet: Roy McMurtry and Tom Wells. McMurtry was named Chair and CEO of the CFL in 1989. Such associations were typical of the masculine power

³⁴ Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714. March 18, 1974.

³⁵ Doug Fisher, "Politics in Canadian football," *Windsor Star*, February 26, 1974, 10.

³⁶ Marc Lalonde, telephone conversation with author, September 23, 2013.

network. Many former athletes capitalize on their fame, using it to enter political life or the world of business and in turn influence political life in this way. In a similar manner, many successful members of the business elite influenced football, the business world, and politics through their positions on community boards, including the boards that ran the community-owned teams. This was the masculine power network in action. It is precisely due to their business connections that these men were highly sought after as board members. Being linked to the community by virtue of being community-owned, does not preclude teams from being infused with a capitalist ethos.³⁷ Those in control of Canadian football reflected the most powerful economic and social interests in the country. This is one of the many ways that football perpetuated masculine power in Canadian society.

The patriarchal nature of Canadian society and Canadian politics was on display in the House of Commons. There were five women elected members of the House, an increase from the lone female elected in the 1968 election.³⁸ Women comprised less than two percent of the elected MPs.

³⁷ Community-owned teams are not technically owned by the municipality. They are usually started by a group of community boosters and often funded by the boosters or through the sale of shares. Profits do not go to the municipality or the shareholders but are usually placed in trust, used to pay debt, or reinvested in the team. These teams are managed by a public board usually comprised of male members of the community's business elite. In some cases the board can appoint members, which may perpetuate control by a small, elite group. While members of the community are represented on the board it is a misnomer to suggest that the community actually has a role in running the team.

³⁸ The women MPs first elected in 1972 were Jeanne Sauvé, Monique Bégin, Albanie Morin, and Flora MacDonald. They joined Grace MacInnis who was elected in 1968 and re-elected in 1972.

6.2 The Speech

On February 21, Minister of Health and Welfare Marc Lalonde spoke to the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs in Regina. “Canadian Football matters. It is not just another form of entertainment . . . it is your game, part of your lives. . . . For some years now, there has been growing concern about the future of Canadian football.”³⁹ Lalonde referred to this as his first major problem in the Health and Welfare portfolio. He supported making the League more Canadian by expanding into the Maritimes, London, Quebec City and possibly having a second team in Toronto. Lalonde spoke of tradition and Americanization.

Canadian football is more than one hundred years old. It has a grand and noble tradition in our country. . . . The future of Canadian football is too large and too important a question to be left to the tender mercies of a few entrepreneurs out for a fast buck. . . . [P]roblems besetting the Canadian Football League are similar to many of our country’s problems. . . American influence threatening to turn what is ours into something that is less us and more them. . . Let me state quite clearly then that the federal government views with disfavour any move to expand the WFL into Canada. I intend to be in touch with provincial and municipal officials within the next few days.⁴⁰

To Lalonde the federal government was simply being consistent. It would not allow the NFL into Montreal, therefore it could not allow the WFL into Toronto. “We can’t

³⁹ Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714, March 18, 1974, Lalonde, “Speech,” 8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 12-3.

penalize Montreal and then let Toronto have a team,” he said. “We are trying to protect all that is Canadian.”⁴¹

In the spring of 1974, rumours began to circulate that Trudeau’s minority government might fall, making a summer election a possibility. To earn a majority, the Liberals desperately needed to increase support in the west. The Liberals had won only three of forty-five seats in the prairies, the heartland of Canadian football. Supporting the league would no doubt increase voter support in the west, a traditional Conservative stronghold. In developing rich energy stores, the west was growing more influential and advocating for more say in a federation that was often seen as eastern-centered, particularly from a prairie point of view. Therefore, it may have been intentional that the speech was planned for Regina. Unlike Munro’s speech fifteen months earlier where he acted within a week of Bassett’s proposed American expansion, Lalonde had waited three months after Johnny Bassett announced Toronto’s WFL team. The delay may have been an attempt to re-introduce this populist policy closer to a possible election date.

After his speech Lalonde received letters and telegrams from many supporters, including Bill McEwen, President of the Sports Federation of Canada, René Toupin, Minister of Recreation for Manitoba, former CFL player Steve Patrick and Bud Sherman, MLAs from Manitoba, and mayors of six Canadian cities with teams in the CFL. The mayors of Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto were not among those in support. Large municipalities offered more entertainment choices, including other sport options. Having a CFL franchise was not as important as in the other smaller cities. In George Grant’s

⁴¹ Christie Blatchford, “Constitutional issue involved in action Northmen suggest,” *Globe and Mail*, April 11, 1974, 35.

polemic *Lament for a Nation*, he complained that pro-Canadianism disappeared first from the larger centres such as Montreal and Toronto. This lack of support for the CFL was an example of what Grant was lamenting.⁴²

Mayor Vic Copps of Hamilton applauded Lalonde for his “patriotic stand on this important national issue”⁴³ and the mayor of Ottawa, Pierre Benoit, passionately wrote there is no greater single contributor to national unity in Canada than Canadian Professional football. While cynics would have us believe that Canadian Professional football is a “business” or an “industry” like any other, it would be difficult but admittedly not impossible to conceive of any “business” or “industry” in Canada the loss of which would have such far reaching and significant ramifications in terms of the social and cultural fabric of the Canadian community. . Canadian citizens from one ocean to the other identify with the Canadian Football League as something uniquely “their own.” In an ideal society, a nation would feel sufficiently secure in its sense of national identity that it need not fear the potential loss of any single element in its make-up. While the Canadian nation has undoubtedly over the past decade achieved a sense of national identity and purpose unparalleled in its troubled history, it has not as yet in my personal opinion

⁴² This was suggested in a 1998 advertisement for the book featured in the *Globe and Mail*. The ad stated that the book foresaw “the decline of the CFL.” *Globe and Mail*, June 20, 1998, D13.

⁴³ Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714, Victor Copps, letter to The Honourable Marc Lalonde, February 26, 1974.

achieved that level of security of having the Canadian Football League compete for the affections of its citizens.⁴⁴

In a press conference in Toronto, Lalonde stated that his speech had the full support of the Cabinet. “This is the one league in professional sport that is composed of exclusively Canadian cities, the last one. . . Our objective is to prevent the CFL from going to the United States and the US leagues from coming into Canada.”⁴⁵

Lalonde argued that, in thwarting the WFL, the federal government was merely being consistent. Canadian lobby groups had demanded the government impose tariffs to protect other facets of Canadian business such as steel, textiles, chemicals, plastics, and dairy products. As well, to protect Canadian entertainers, the government had imposed a restriction on the number of foreign programs that Canadian television networks could use in their prime time slots. Lalonde argued that preventing American football from coming to Canada simply followed this pattern.⁴⁶

According to Lalonde, only two things could stop the government from moving to block the WFL: lack of public support or lack of support for the minority government in the House of Commons.⁴⁷ This last point underlined the importance of NDP support. Earning public support would be important for the government to push forward with such

⁴⁴ Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714, Pierre Benoit, letter to The Honourable Marc Lalonde, February 25, 1974.

⁴⁵ Sullivan, *The Grey Cup Story*, 203.

⁴⁶ Goodman, *Huddling Up*, 166.

⁴⁷ John Gray, “It would kill CFL Marc Lalonde claims,” *Toronto Star*, February 22, 1974, A8

a drastic and rare foray into professional sport.⁴⁸ If Lalonde was successful in garnering public support, it would be much easier to receive the backing of opposition parties. It appeared that he had support from many provincial and municipal politicians; another key group that Lalonde would need support from was the media.

Not surprisingly, the staunchly Liberal *Toronto Star* was the first paper to join municipal and provincial politicians in favour of federal government intervention.⁴⁹ The paper accused John Bassett Sr. of being a hypocrite for vetoing a second CFL team in Toronto and then bringing in a WFL team. Once again, prominent newspaper columnists weighed in. Geoffrey Stevens from the *Globe and Mail* agreed with *The Star*, writing that actions must be taken to prevent professional football from becoming like professional hockey. “Mr. Lalonde and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau have concluded that Canadian football is one of the things that helps to bind this country together. They feel it is worth saving and they are right.”⁵⁰

Christie Blatchford, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, agreed with Stevens, quoting senator Keith Davey, who said Canadian football is “a national institution and what other national institutions have we got besides the CBC and *Maclean’s* magazine?”⁵¹ The *Edmonton Journal*, the *Ottawa Citizen*, and the *Montreal Gazette* all featured editorials in favour of federal government action. The *Gazette* argued that “[s]upport for the CFL is as justified as subsidies for Canadian theatre and prevention of foreign ownership of

⁴⁸ Ibid., A1.

⁴⁹ “Threat to Canadian Football,” *Toronto Star*, February 23, 1974, B2.

⁵⁰ Geoffrey Stevens, “No impromptu outburst,” *Globe and Mail*, February 23, 1974, 6.

⁵¹ Christie Blatchford, “The Winter of Football,” *Globe and Mail*, February 26, 1974, 32.

Canadian newspapers.”⁵² Letters to the editor in the *Toronto Star* were three to one in favour of Lalonde. Almost every major newspaper in the country supported the federal government’s initiative to keep Canada free of American football.

However, in politics there is always opposition. The conservative newspaper the *Toronto Sun* featured an editorial opposing the move, which was not surprising since *The Sun* had ties to the Bassett-owned defunct *Toronto Telegram*.⁵³ Demonstrating the two solitudes that exist in Canada, the English press in Montreal was supportive, but an article in the French language *Le Devoir* was not.⁵⁴ Prominent Conservative supporter Dalton Camp authored an editorial in the *London Free Press* arguing that the Liberal government should not be protecting inferior football but should let the market determine the game’s survival. “If [Lalonde] is saying that the grand old game of Canadian football cannot withstand the presence of another team of Americans playing with a different ball on a narrower field, then he only confirmed what the Canadian citizen suspects—that the game is over. The dilemma is typically Canadian, I fear, and so, I fear, will be the denouement.”⁵⁵ The new football league was automatically assumed to be superior to the Canadian version.

⁵² “Hold that Line,” *Edmonton Journal*, February 27, 1974, 4; “Football Tariff,” *Ottawa Journal*, February 27, 1974, 6; “Political Football,” *Montreal Gazette*, February 23, 1974, 8.

⁵³ “Running Scared,” *Toronto Sun*, February 25, 1974, 10. Many *Telegram* employees found employment at the *Sun* after the *Telegram* folded. See Charles Templeton, *Charles Templeton: An Anecdotal Memoir* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 172.

⁵⁴ Laurent Laplante, “Jusqu’où ira M. Marc Lalonde?,” *Le Devoir*, February 26, 1974, 4.

⁵⁵ Dalton Camp, “Canada Loves to Lose,” *London Free Press*, March 13, 1974, 6.

It should be of no surprise that the Bassett-owned CTV flagship station, CFTO in Toronto, also became actively critical of the Bill.⁵⁶ Bassett's media holdings enjoyed protection from foreign competition through regulations restricting foreign ownership. In addition, Johnny Bassett's involvement in the movie business was supported by federal government subsidies and tax breaks.⁵⁷ Despite this support, the Bassetts railed against government intervention with regards to another aspect of culture.

The debate was coloured by nationalistic overtones that equated the decline of the CFL with the loss of the country. On CBC radio, sport columnist Dick Beddoes stated if somebody sells out the CFL for a mess of American potage, another chunk of our uniqueness is lost. Nationalism is precisely what the government is talking about. Do we want July 1st or July 4th? Will we submit still further to being the 51st American state or are we going to persist on a national basis with a game at least partially different from an American game? . . . The CFL is only a small patch on Canada's trousers. But when the day comes that Regina, or Edmonton, or Calgary, or Winnipeg does not play Toronto, or Hamilton, or Ottawa, or Montreal at football – that day brings a bit closer the collapse of Confederation.⁵⁸

It was not just the media that supported the Liberal government; this loyalty extended to the fans. The *Hamilton Spectator* newspaper produced survey results that

⁵⁶ Cosentino, "Football," 164.

⁵⁷ James Fleming, Liberal MP from Toronto, criticized the Bassetts in the House of Commons for accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in subsidies to support their movies, but opposing government intervention in football. See Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 19, 1974, 1587.

⁵⁸ CBC Radio, *Cross Country Checkup*, March 17, 1974, available from the CBC.

indicated 81 percent of people surveyed in Hamilton were behind Lalonde, and the *Edmonton Journal* revealed the results of a poll indicating 70 percent in favour of Lalonde. A poll taken by Regina radio station CKCK found respondents were two to one in favour of government intervention.⁵⁹

Despite the political chaos in the background, the business of football proceeded as normal for the Toronto Northmen of the WFL. Bassett hired Leo Cahill, a high profile former CFL coach, as General Manager, and he set about signing a head coach and players, even trying to lure Canadian quarterbacking legend Russ Jackson out of retirement.⁶⁰ The Northmen still needed a place to play. The Bassetts had exclusive use of Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition stadium for the Argonauts. Lalonde had stated that he would pressure Toronto city council to refuse to allow an American-based football team to use the stadium.⁶¹ The directors of the CNE approved an application by the Toronto Northmen to play in CNE stadium, but then refused to sign the contract. Industry, Trade and Commerce Minister Alastair Gillespie, a Liberal MP from Toronto, instructed the CNE board to deny the WFL team access to play at the stadium.⁶² A Toronto city councillor recommended that the city purchase the Argos (at this time most CFL teams were owned by the municipality they represented) but this was rejected by

⁵⁹ "Fans back Lalonde in survey," *Hamilton Spectator*, March 15, 1974, 14; LAC, Fitness and Amateur Sport – Football – General, RG29, Vol. 1760, file 15-6-11 pt 3, Lorne Harasen letter to Marc Lalonde, March 28, 1974.

⁶⁰ Eddie MacCabe, "Jackson won't come back," *Ottawa Journal*, March 6, 1974, 26.

⁶¹ Gray, "It would kill CFL," *Toronto Star*, February 22, 1974, A1.

⁶² "Northmen receive tentative approval," *Globe and Mail*, February 23, 1974, A1.

Metro Chairman Paul Godfrey.⁶³ After meeting with Ontario Premier Bill Davis, Lalonde met with Godfrey and Toronto Mayor David Crombie to clarify federal government policy regarding the CFL. Lalonde was defiant. “We have the power. We will use the power.”⁶⁴ Metro council ignored Lalonde’s threat and voted twenty-four to two to sign a one year lease with the Bassetts.⁶⁵

Toronto’s WFL franchise was obviously the main topic at a very stressful CFL annual meeting in Toronto. Bob Harris, seeking an expansion team for the city of London with the federal government’s blessing, was in attendance. After three days of meetings, only three of the forty-two agenda items had been discussed, with one item dominating discussion.⁶⁶ Every team representative except Montreal’s was united in opposition to Bassett, citing him for conflict of interest.⁶⁷ This was not surprising. Since the Argos supplied the majority of revenue to the equalization fund upon which some teams depended, the team officials feared this loss of revenue. Filled with rage at being attacked, Bassett immediately put the Argonaut team up for sale.⁶⁸

⁶³ “CNE Directors Hedge on New Football Team,” *Toronto Star*, February 23, 1974, A10. Just a few years later, Godfrey would start his unsuccessful chase of an NFL team for Toronto, a pursuit that would last decades. See Naylor and Brunt, “Touchdown in T.O.,” *Globe and Mail*, S1.

⁶⁴ Christie Blatchford, “Lalonde Insists Government to Keep Northmen Out,” *Globe and Mail*, February 27, 1974, 31.

⁶⁵ “Metro Council grants WFL club one-year lease at CNE stadium,” *Globe and Mail*, February 27, 1974, 31.

⁶⁶ Al Sokol, “Bassett offers to sell Argos for \$3.3 million,” *Toronto Star*, February 22, 1974, C1.

⁶⁷ Eaton Howitt, “A Disappointed Bassett offers Argos for Sale,” *Toronto Sun*, February 22, 1974, 36.

⁶⁸ Siggins, *Bassett*, 231.

While a handful of offers for the Argonauts trickled in, the situation was beginning to take its toll on league officials. Commissioner Jake Gaudaur was reportedly being treated for exhaustion and Tiger-Cat President Ralph Sazio collapsed in an elevator at the CFL meetings.⁶⁹ The Argos were eventually sold to hotel chain owner Bill Hodgson for \$3.3 million. Despite having handed over one half-million dollars in equalization money, Bassett left the CFL having made millions.⁷⁰

The new owner of the Toronto Argonauts removed himself from the WFL debate, but criticized the media for contributing to the Canadian inferiority complex by labelling Canadian football inferior. The Toronto WFL team had purchased advertisements in the Toronto media calling for “a big league team for a big league town” which Hodgson felt was an insult to the CFL. “Just because we haven’t got an American stamp on us” Hodgson said, “we’re supposed to be a bush league.”⁷¹

It was soon announced that groups in Calgary and Vancouver were also seeking WFL franchises, which reinforced the government’s fear that, if one team was allowed, others would follow.⁷² Bassett met with Lalonde twice in the first week of March in an attempt to change his mind. After the meetings, Lalonde, more determined than ever, stated that “Parliament will have to decide if we keep Canadian football alive or act like a

⁶⁹ Rex MacLeod, “Barbaro and Ballard agree, want to study Argo books,” *Globe and Mail*, February 26, 1974, 32.

⁷⁰ Siggins, *Bassett*, 231.

⁷¹ Mary Trueman, “Hodgson Angry with Media for ‘Bush’ Labels,” *Globe and Mail*, April 24 1974, 34.

⁷² Canadian Press, “Vancouver-backed Calgary group seeks franchise in WFL,” *Globe and Mail*, March 2, 1974, 47; Dick Beddoes, “Jake’s Ottawa pitch,” *Globe and Mail*, April 18, 1974, 45.

bunch of colonials.”⁷³ Questions arose regarding the power of the federal government to prevent an American franchise with Canadian ownership from operating in Canada. Despite these serious concerns regarding the legality of such an action, Lalonde was not deterred. He stated that protecting an all-Canadian professional sporting league would be standard government policy, and this was the only league left.⁷⁴

6.3 Forming Federal Football Policy

Prime Minister Trudeau continued to demonstrate his support for the CFL. Since his election, Trudeau had been in the stands for most Grey Cup games and encouraged cabinet ministers, particularly from Quebec, to attend as well. He was singled out by Commissioner Gaudaur for his enthusiastic support of the Grey Cup—attending luncheons, performing the ceremonial kick off, presenting the trophy to the winning team, doing whatever Gaudaur asked of him.⁷⁵ Even when the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), a separatist group in Quebec, threatened his life should he attend the Grey Cup played in Montreal in 1969, Trudeau attended the game despite the objections of his security personnel.⁷⁶ Trudeau’s very visible support was a highly symbolic gesture associating himself personally with the Grey Cup game. On March 7, 1974, Prime

⁷³ Canadian Press, “Bassett fails to sway,” *Globe and Mail*, March 13, 1974, 34.

⁷⁴ Terrence Belford, “Lalonde Holds Firm on Stand to Bar WFL from Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1974, 31.

⁷⁵ Gaudaur, *1970 CFL Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1971, 5.

⁷⁶ “Playing a Dangerous Game,” *Engraved on a Nation*, TSN, Toronto. Broadcast date October, 26, 2012.

Minister Pierre Trudeau rose in the House of Commons and promised his government would “take whatever means are necessary” to protect the CFL.⁷⁷

On March 11, Lalonde presented a memorandum with the objective of bringing to the attention of cabinet members the various problems facing football in Canada and “to recommend measures to ensure the maintenance of a truly Canadian Football League.” The memo outlined how the league’s long and important tradition, particularly the Grey Cup, acted as “a unifying force for Canadians and is a unique expression of Canadian nationalism.” It added that the CFL was threatened by potential American expansion into Canada. Action must be taken, he concluded, or “a significant Canadian institution will be lost.”⁷⁸

The memorandum was even more extreme than the threats suggested by John Munro just fifteen months earlier. Lalonde proposed that no professional football team be allowed to play in Canada unless part of an entirely Canadian league. In addition, an increase in the percentage of Canadian players would be recommended. The broadcasting act could be amended so that Canadian broadcasters would not be allowed to televise games from a non-Canadian league. This would prohibit the CBC from televising NFL games.⁷⁹ Newly formed national network *Global*, looking to grab headlines with some

⁷⁷ Bruce Cheadle, “Feds Once Ready to Protect CFL,” *Edmonton Journal*, November 16, 1995, D5.

⁷⁸ LAC, Cabinet Documents 120-167, 1974, RG2-B-2 2005 0418, Vol. 6440, Box 4, File 165-74.

⁷⁹ LAC, Cabinet Documents, 772-69, 1974, RG2-2005 0418, Vol. 6440, Box 4, File 165-74, Memorandum March 11 1974.

new content, expressed interest in televising Toronto's WFL games, but backed down after hearing Lalonde's threats.⁸⁰

There was more. Lalonde suggested the Department of Manpower and Immigration could deny visas to Americans playing for any team not in an all-Canadian League. The Income Tax Act could deter the attractiveness of investment for any franchise other than one in an all Canadian league. Certain expenses would not be tax deductible by owners of a Canadian based team in a non-Canadian league. Furthermore, an Act of Parliament could be enacted pursuant to the Trade and Commerce power to prohibit any such league operating in Canada as an international commercial venture.⁸¹

Lalonde had already been in contact with the Department of Justice, the Department of Finance, and the Department of Manpower and Immigration and had received unanimous support for his proposals. The memo stated that it was important that the government act swiftly and decisively as hesitation might jeopardize "the broad support" the government had received and might encourage WFL proponents into believing that they could pressure the government into a change of position.⁸² Lalonde indicated that, while the west was supportive, the media in Toronto and Montreal "have been generally negative to the government's stand." Lalonde felt the majority of parliamentarians would support government intervention. He was confident that a Bill

⁸⁰ Canadian Press, "Lalonde may use government clout to fight WFL," *Ottawa Citizen*, March 6 1974, 15.

⁸¹ LAC, Cabinet Documents, 120-167, 1974, RG2-B-2 2005 0418, Vol. 6440, Box 4, File 165-74, memorandum dated March 11, 1974.

⁸² Ibid.

would pass even with the government's minority status.⁸³ Out of all the options, Lalonde personally supported pursuing an Act of Parliament. Whatever option was chosen, he felt, "[o]nce a bill is ready for introduction, it should be considered by Parliament as a matter of urgency." He began working closely with Justice Minister Otto Lang on drafting a bill that would enact legislation to carry out the proposals detailed in his memorandum.⁸⁴

Prime Minister Trudeau believed that protection of the CFL was similar to protecting other cultural areas such as film and publishing, but expressed concern about the wisdom of such legislation.⁸⁵ Trudeau was much more cautious and calculating than Lalonde. In Cabinet, members of the government considered alternative approaches. There were members of Cabinet who suggested that football was not viewed by some Canadians as a true Canadian sport because coaches, managers, and the best players at the professional level were most often American. The point was raised that the government had done nothing to protect the NHL from adding American teams in each of its expansions. In addition, Major League Baseball was a continental professional sport and was viewed in a positive light.⁸⁶ An article in the *Toronto Sun* equated Lalonde's proposed legislation to US President Richard Nixon preventing the Montreal Expos from

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Canadian Press, "Justice Branch Drafting Anti-US Grid Tactics," *Globe and Mail*, March 20, 1974, 32.

⁸⁵ LAC, Cabinet Meetings, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6436, "Protection of Canadian Football," meeting Date, March 14, 1974.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

joining Major League Baseball, or prohibiting the thirteen US-based teams from playing in the NHL.⁸⁷

Some members of Cabinet supported the Bill because this was the only professional sporting league entirely in Canada and the western teams were community-owned rather than profit seeking businesses. The CFL was thought to be an important element in unifying the country and providing most regions with a home team to support. Without the CFL, the prairies would possibly be left without professional sport. The history and tradition of the league were also viewed as positives. Montreal politicians were aggressively lobbying for an NFL team, and, if the government did not prevent the WFL from operating in Canada, it would not be able to prevent the NFL from moving into the new Olympic Stadium. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the feeling around the table was that the loss of the CFL would be viewed as another example of a disappearing Canadian way of life.⁸⁸

Minister of Immigration Bob Andras was hesitant about changing the Immigration Act.⁸⁹ Simon Reisman, deputy minister of Finance, also advised against restricting immigration, changing the Income Tax Act or banning broadcasts because he feared American retaliation.⁹⁰ Ultimately, Trudeau agreed with Lalonde that an Act of Parliament would be the best approach, but hoped that the threat of legislation would be

⁸⁷ John Robertson, *Toronto Sun*, March 10 1974, S4.

⁸⁸ LAC, Cabinet Meetings, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6436, meeting date March 14, 1974.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Meeting date March 21, 1974.

⁹⁰ LAC, Cabinet Document 165/74, RG41-A-V-2, Vol. 872, File 1, 2, PG 7-6-1 Pt 2, 1971-1978, Simon Reisman, memo to the Minister dated March 12, 1974.

enough to frighten the WFL away. It was decided to draft legislation designed to prevent a league from operating in Canada, while ensuring a minimum number of players on each team were Canadian. The Cabinet decided that the penalties would be two years in jail and would not apply to the players but to the owners, operators and managers if there was non-compliance.⁹¹

Getting nowhere with Lalonde, who was now jokingly called the Minister of Muscles by the press, John Bassett Jr. took his fight to the media.⁹² In a lengthy interview with the *Toronto Star*, Bassett argued that his franchise was a Canadian team owned by a Canadian, and was no different than the teams in the CFL that were also dominated by American players, American administrators and American coaches. Bassett threatened to sue the government and asked “whether or not a government can act so peremptorily and arrogantly—just walk up to an all-Canadian company and say: ‘Get lost, fellows.’ That Big Brotherism is really a frightening thing. An individual should be able to stand up to this great monolithic structure, this is the real gut issue.” For many, government interference into the lives of Canadians was the issue. It was also an east–west issue, Bassett Jr. complained, “Lalonde sits up there (in Ottawa) and even if he gets 40,000 letters from Toronto supporting the team he says: ‘So what? Everybody in the rest of the country hates Toronto anyway.’”⁹³ Some felt the CFL had become a political football to

⁹¹ Bruce Cheadle, “Feds Once Ready to Protect CFL,” *Edmonton Journal*, November 16, 1995, D5.

⁹² Dick Beddoes, “By Dick Beddoes,” *Globe and Mail*, March 21, 1974, 44.

⁹³ John Gault, “‘I’m Going to Fight,’ says Bassett The Little Guy,” *Toronto Star*, March 16, 1974, B5.

be used by the Liberal party. John Bassett Sr., a very strong Conservative supporter, had run twice unsuccessfully for the party federally and his son stated the Liberals were using his political leanings against him.⁹⁴

John Bassett Jr. was very critical of the delay which occurred before the government acted. He revealed that he had already spent \$310,000 and signed seventy players worth \$2 million.⁹⁵ He argued that the team had been announced months before Lalonde delivered his Regina manifesto, saying that if he had been aware about the government's policy, he would not have bought the team. The article concluded that a survey in the *Toronto Sun* found 87 percent were in opposition to the Liberal Football Bill.⁹⁶ Results of the poll were interpreted as a vote against federal government interference in sport.⁹⁷ To answer concerns about his delay in acting, Lalonde explained that he had doubts that the league would get off the ground and had been away at the Commonwealth Games. In addition, Lalonde reminded everyone that a meeting between Munro and Bassett Sr. in 1972, as well as the media coverage after Munro had revealed federal government policy on American expansion, had made it very well known that the Liberals were opposed to a Canadian team in an American league, or an American team in a Canadian league.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Siggins, *Bassett*, 232.

⁹⁵ CP, "Bassett fails to sway Lalonde," *Globe and Mail*, March 13, 1974, 34

⁹⁶ Gault, "'I'm Going to Fight,' says Bassett The Little Guy," *Toronto Star*, March 16, 1974, B5. "Northmen favored in poll," *Toronto Sun*, March 21, 1974, 53.

⁹⁷ "Northmen favored in poll," *Toronto Sun*, March 21, 1974, 53.

⁹⁸ Geoffrey Stevens, "mad, mad, mad," *Globe and Mail*, April 4, 1974, 6.

To prepare for the inaugural season, the WFL held its draft and in doing so demonstrated the extent to which the new league could damage the CFL. Of the 480 players chosen in the league's draft, seventy-nine were currently playing in the CFL, a list that included many of the most talented players. Gaudaur had warned that the CFL would be unable to compete with the rival league's salaries, and it seemed that the CFL might lose as many as eight or nine of the best players from each team. Carol Stallworth, part-owner of the Birmingham franchise, said that the WFL would not honour CFL contracts: "Why should we honor them, if they aren't going to honor American enterprise in Canada?"⁹⁹

For the American players it was an opportunity to play for more money in their native land. All-star running back John Harvey, All-star linemen Tom Laputka, quarterbacks George Mira, Greg Barton, and Eric Guthrie, linebacker Sam Britts, and running back Jesse Mims signed with WFL teams.¹⁰⁰ However, many of the top Canadian players were also selected in the draft, including the two most recent recipients of the award honouring the outstanding Canadian player of the year, Jim Young and Gerry Organ. The CFL had mandated the use of local players in an effort to create identity and commonality with the Canadian fans. Losing these players would be a big blow. Despite that fact that Bassett had promised not to harm the CFL, the Toronto Northmen drafted eleven players under contract to CFL teams, more than any other WFL team. Faced with competition, salaries were sure to climb for players and coaches, drastically affecting an already fragile league. With the WFL and NFL now blanketing the US, it would be much

⁹⁹ Trueman, "Hodgson Angry," *Globe and Mail*, April 24, 1974, 34.

¹⁰⁰ Mira was the most valuable player in the championship game.

more difficult for the CFL to land a US television contract, which would also affect the bottom line.

While the issue of the Americanization of the CFL had waged for years, economic factors had been surprisingly pushed aside by issues of nationalism, and had never entered into the debate. The CFL was economically fragile at best, but the argument could be made that it was still worthy of federal protection because of the economic activity generated by the league. The league contributed to the economy through employment and taxes, yet economics was never raised as a reason for protective legislation. The mantra had always been to save the league for reasons of national unity and identity.

While the focus had been to protect the league for cultural reasons, economic factors should not be dismissed. The federal government had a history of protecting private businesses from foreign competition. The survival of the CFL would certainly benefit many sponsors, supporters, advertisers, and those who made use of the teams, stadiums, tickets, and associated revenues to further their businesses, including many interests integrated into the masculine power network. For the government seeking public support, it may have been easier to couch this intervention as standing up to the Americans as opposed to subsidies for businesses.

Not only was the WFL able to entice players from the CFL, it was complimenting the league by copying it as well. Ten rule changes were planned to make the WFL more exciting than the NFL, and half of them were rules in place in the CFL. The WFL adopted Canadian rules outlawing fair catches on punts and allowing more players on offence more opportunities to move in motion prior to the start of a play. This would

contribute to more wide-open, higher scoring, offensive football. Like the CFL, the new league featured a schedule starting in the summer and concluding in November with games on weeknights. As in the CFL, kick-offs, used to put the ball in play at the start of each half and after scoring plays, were moved back closer to the kicker's goal-line, to ensure more kicks would be run back. Receivers required only one foot in-bounds when catching a pass making it easier to generate more offence and scoring, and holding was reduced to a ten yard penalty from fifteen.¹⁰¹ Using these rules and featuring many CFL players, the WFL was poised to attract some attention from the football fan in Canada.

John Bassett Jr. called the government's position "totally asinine" and would not give up his fight. Having first gone to the media for support, he would now go after elected officials.¹⁰² He sent letters to people who had expressed interest in purchasing season tickets to the Northmen games, asking them to write their Members of Parliament requesting support for the WFL in Canada. Northmen lawyer Herb Solway sent a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau opposing the proposed legislation and federal government interference, while arguing that the Bassetts had no knowledge of the federal government policy known as the "Munro Doctrine." The letter stated that "[t]he supposed issue of Nationalism is a bogus one. Football is no more Canadian culture than literature, poetry, ballet or music."¹⁰³ Solway's position was that Canadian football was not part of

¹⁰¹ World Football League, WFL Rule Changes, http://wfl.charlottehornetswfl.com/pages_wfl/rule_changes.php

¹⁰² Sullivan, *The Grey Cup Story*, 203.

¹⁰³ LAC, Office of the Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare – Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch – Sports – Football, 1974/03-1975/01, RG29, Vol. 1571, letter from Herb Solway, lawyer for Toronto Northmen, to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, March 29, 1974.

Canadian culture, while the federal Liberals were making exactly the opposite argument. Lalonde's view was consistent with years of Canadian cultural protectionism. Canadian football, like Canadian literature, poetry, ballet or music, was a very important element of Canadian culture. As such, like those other forms of culture, it was worth protecting.

Solway knew that this was a nationalistic debate, and refused to admit that the issue was about football as a cultural form and more importantly an indigenous cultural form. He made a number of promises in an effort to gain government support. Since the CFL was dependent on equalization money from the Toronto Argonauts, Solway promised that, for the next ten years, the Northmen would pay money equal to the Argos' most recent equalization payment. Since the Bassetts had been given WFL territorial rights for all of Canada, they promised that they would not allow another WFL team in Canada. In addition, since Bassett owned Canada's WFL broadcast rights, he guaranteed that there would be no Canadian national TV contracts for the WFL. In the letter, Solway agreed to honour all CFL player contracts, to not sign players under contract to CFL teams, and to participate in a CFL–WFL All Star game with proceeds to go to the CFL. However, if the government proceeded with legislation, Solway threatened WFL teams would sign “70% to 80% of the present name players in the Canadian Football League.”¹⁰⁴ The letter argued that Toronto could support two teams, and these actions would save the CFL as it would keep the WFL out of Montreal and Vancouver. In conclusion, the letter argued there was “clearly no requirement to introduce legislation.”¹⁰⁴ Solway included these promises and threats in a letter that was sent to every MP on Parliament Hill.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

In response to Solway's letter, a statement was released expressing how the government viewed this debate. The statement read in part, "we believe that Canadian football is a vital element in our culture, as are Canadian literature, poetry, ballet and music."¹⁰⁵ To the federal Liberals, Canadian football was an important part of Canadian culture. The CFL responded with a fourteen page letter of its own addressed to every MP. Commissioner Jake Gaudaur effectively rebutted each of the points raised by the Northmen, arguing, for example, that the Bassetts were well aware of the federal policy articulated forcefully by John Munro in 1972. As well, the Argos had historically contributed more in equalization payments than was being promised by the Northmen. Solway was offering less than \$50,000 when Gaudaur argued that the Argos had averaged more than \$55,000 in payments over the previous six seasons. In addition Solway was excluding exhibition and playoff game money and had not factored in the potential loss of television revenue.¹⁰⁶

But the heart of Gaudaur's argument was an appeal to patriotism. He raised the contribution sport makes to nation-building and a distinctive Canadian consciousness. Taking Solway's lead, he contrasted sport with art, but argued that sport had the ability to touch the lives of more Canadians than art. The CFL, a unique form of Canadian culture referred to by Gaudaur as "unique Canadiana," was controlled in Canada by Canadians, and featured teams in smaller Canadian centres, in contrast to the National Hockey

¹⁰⁵ Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, Information Kit on the Canadian Football League - World Football League Controversy, AMICUS No. 16251714, March 18, 1974, Lalonde, "Briefing Kit."

¹⁰⁶ Beddoes, "Jake's Ottawa pitch," *Globe and Mail*, April 18, 1974, 45.

League which was only in a few larger Canadian cities and was controlled by American interests.¹⁰⁷ Gaudaur explained that the CFL could have expanded to the US, but that would have eliminated teams in less populated parts of Canada. Allowing the Northmen in Canada “most certainly would trigger a chain reaction which would promptly lead to the demise of the Canadian Football League.” Linking the state historically to football, he quoted Prime Ministers Diefenbaker and Pearson who argued that Canadian football was an important part of Canadian culture that united Canadians and was worth preserving. He argued that, if unsuccessful, we “will have lost 100 years of Canadian sporting tradition. . . [t]he Grey Cup Game as one of Canada’s greatest annual events will disappear with it, and whatever it has meant to Canada as an East-West unifying factor.”¹⁰⁸

The Canadian Amateur Football Association (CAFA), the body responsible for amateur football in Canada, also sent a letter to all MPs. The federal government had not offered subsidies to the professional game, but had offered to increase subsidies to amateur football. The CAFA was concerned that the disappearance of the CFL would result in less funding for amateur football in Canada. Nationalism was once again the key argument as the letter made the point that Canadian football was in jeopardy. The letter

¹⁰⁷ Peter White, “Gaudaur Shows Restrained Satisfaction As House Approves Bill In Principle,” *Globe and Mail*, April 24, 1974, 34.

¹⁰⁸ Canadian Press, “Gaudaur Appeals to MPs to Protect CFL and ‘100 Years of Canadian Tradition’,” *Globe and Mail*, April 17, 1974, 32.

raised themes of tradition, national unity, and national prestige that a uniquely Canadian game brings to the country.¹⁰⁹

On March 21, the first draft of a Bill was decided upon by Cabinet. It read in part:

-Whereas football has an established tradition in Canada as witnessed by the Cup symbolizing football supremacy in Canada, which was donated by His

Excellency, the late Governor General Earl Grey in 1909 for that purpose.

-Whereas Canadian football developed for itself as a unique national institution contributing to the strengthening of the bonds of nationhood and it is in the national and public interest that an effort be made to protect this institution from the encroachments of foreign sponsored enterprises extending into Canada.¹¹⁰

The Bill stated no professional football team could operate in Canada unless it was part of a league composed of teams representing exclusively Canadian cities, provinces or regions. Existing immigration regulations would be used to deny alien professional football players employment visas and the Bill restricted American players to 45 percent of a team.¹¹¹ Increasing the number of Canadian players was supported by many of the CFL teams for numerous reasons, with controlling costs likely the dominant consideration.¹¹² In a league where so many teams were struggling financially, Canadian

¹⁰⁹ LAC, Joe Clarke fonds [multiple media] , MG26 R 1-2 13, 1928-1993, letter from the Canadian Amateur Football Association to members of Parliament, April 8, 1974.

¹¹⁰ Canada, Parliament. House of Commons, "An Act Respecting Canadian Professional Football," Bill C-22, 29th Parliament, 2nd Session, 1974 (Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada - Publishing, 1974), 1.

¹¹¹ LAC, Cabinet Documents, 120-167, 1974, RG2-B-2 2005 0418, Vol. 6440, Box 4, File 165-74.

¹¹² John Gray, "Lalonde says Law will Limit Americans in Canadian Football," *Toronto Star*, April 3, 1974, A1

players were paid, on average, less than American players. A last minute item added to the Bill was the lifting of the local television blackout in cases where games were sold out. Television blackouts may have contributed to the appetite for American football by preventing fans from watching Canadian football when games were sold out and blacked-out, and turning to NFL games instead. A note from the Privy Council office suggested the government intended to have the Bill voted on as soon as possible.¹¹³

6.4 Signing the Superstars

As kick-off to a WFL season drew closer, the league had successfully grabbed headlines in Canada, but needed to gain attention in the United States. In 1972 the NFL's Miami Dolphins had become the first team to experience an undefeated season, capping it off with a Super Bowl victory, and following that up with another Super Bowl win the next year. Three of the key players were Larry Csonka, selected to the Pro Bowl (All Star game) five times as well as chosen MVP of the most recent Super Bowl; Paul Warfield, an eight time Pro Bowl receiver; and Jim Kiick, a two-time Pro Bowl running back. Csonka had set a rushing record in the most recent Super Bowl and Warfield had led the league in receiving touchdowns in 1973. The sporting world was rocked when the trio signed a staggering three-year \$3 million contract with the Toronto Northmen, despite having a year left on their NFL contracts. Csonka, earning \$60,000 as the best fullback in the NFL, signed for more than \$450,000 per year, a three-bedroom apartment rent free in

¹¹³ LAC, Cabinet Meetings, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6436, "An Act Respecting Canadian Professional Football," meeting date April 4, 1974.

Toronto, and a new luxury car each year.¹¹⁴ *Time* magazine called the signing “the deal that astonished the sports world.”¹¹⁵ The Bassetts had sold the Argos for \$3.3 million and used the money to execute the biggest signing in the history of professional sport. The deal was so important that many team owners in the WFL as well as the League president agreed to help pay a portion of the contracts.¹¹⁶

Now the Northmen were making headlines on both sides of the border, and the signings had provided the WFL with a measure of legitimacy. The WFL team was demonstrating it would compete for the football fan in Toronto, banking that Torontonians would prefer to watch proven American NFL stars such as Csonka, Warfield and Kiick over anything the Argos could offer. Bassett Jr. had threatened “the biggest war you've ever seen in your life” and he was following through.¹¹⁷ A government spokesperson said the Bassetts are “more stupid than we thought.”¹¹⁸ The three superstars signed their contracts in the Prime Minister Suite in Toronto’s Sutton Place Hotel, under a portrait of Prime Minister Trudeau. Lalonde said after the signing “[t]his more than ever strengthens my resolve to force the Northmen out of Canada... the Northmen will do all they can to damage the Canadian Football League.”¹¹⁹ To Lalonde,

¹¹⁴ Mark Speck, *And a Dollar Short: The Empty Promises, Broken Dreams and Somewhat-Less-Than-Comic Misadventures of the 1974 Florida Blazers* (Haworth, NJ: St. Johann Press, 2011), 65.

¹¹⁵ “The Defection Deal,” *Time*, April 15, 1974, 68.

¹¹⁶ Jim Proudfoot, “Big Signings Will Solidify Federal Stand,” *Toronto Star*, April 1, 1974, B2.

¹¹⁷ Siggins, *Bassett*, 231.

¹¹⁸ “Sleeper Play,” *Toronto Sun*, April 2, 1974, 10.

¹¹⁹ Dick Beddoes, “By Dick Beddoes,” *Globe and Mail*, April 1, 1974, 17.

the signing confirmed, that the WFL presented a challenge to the CFL. A Lalonde associate stated that “[n]o one should underestimate just how tough Lalonde is prepared to be.”¹²⁰ Gaudaur stated “we’re in this for a fight to the finish.”¹²¹

The signing was not just to make headlines, but was carefully orchestrated to put pressure on the government. Lalonde recognized it as such when he stated “[i]f this is meant as a squeeze on Parliament then it will be counter-productive. Parliamentarians will not take kindly to this kind of pressure.”¹²² The WFL was gambling that Canadians would demand the opportunity to be able to see this talent perform in Canada, and pressure the government into withdrawing the Bill. A spokesperson for Lalonde’s office confirmed that “the signings were a desperate measure by the Northmen to force public opinion against the Government.”¹²³ This belief was reinforced when Miami Dolphins owner Joe Robbie said that he was told that the players “had to sign with Toronto immediately because the WFL is in serious trouble with the Canadian Government, and [the team] wants to embarrass the Government by getting the public against it.”¹²⁴ Northmen General Manager Leo Cahill confirmed that signing the three superstars was intended to force the government to reconsider the legislation.¹²⁵ This explains why the

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ George Gross, “. . . while initiating peace talks,” *Toronto Sun*, March 21, 1974, 53.

¹²² “Lalonde Insists Those Miami Football Stars Won’t Play Here,” *Toronto Star*, April 1 1974, 1.

¹²³ Beddoes, “By Dick Beddoes,” *Globe and Mail*, April 1, 1974, 17; Canadian Press, “Dolphins know WFL for real,” *Montreal Star*, April 1, 1974, B1.

¹²⁴ Beddoes, “By Dick Beddoes,” *Globe and Mail*, April 1, 1974, 17.

¹²⁵ Canadian Press, “Dolphins know WFL for real,” *Montreal Star*, B1.

unprecedented move was made to sign players with a year left on their contracts. The Executive Director of the NFL Players' Association agreed. Ed Garvey believed that the signing of the three superstars was a strategic move to counter the proposed legislation and added that he felt that the WFL would "destroy the Canadian league."¹²⁶

The blockbuster contract signing seemed to galvanize more media support for the minority Liberal government. An editorial in *Maclean's* magazine was supportive:

Bassett has been raging against the government's interference in what he regards as a straight business deal. It's been a whole series of "straight business deals" just like this that have made Canada the only country in history that has voluntarily placed itself into something perilously close to colonial status. . . Canadian institutions that arouse people's feelings are few enough. We can't afford to desert this one when it needs us most.¹²⁷

The editorial argued that the Football Bill was not a political move, speculating that the west would not vote for Trudeau's Liberals even if he were the water boy for the beloved Saskatchewan Roughriders. The editorial praised the Liberals, "[t]his seems to be a straightforward, if rare, case of the Liberal government placing the longterm national interest ahead of short-run political considerations." The editorial ended with a powerful quote from Commissioner Gaudaur: "If we give in, we'll lose 100 years of tradition of Canadian football."¹²⁸

¹²⁶ W. Wallace, "Dolphins Go After Unsigned," *New York Times*, April 2, 1974, 49.

¹²⁷ "Holding the line with Marc Lalonde," *Maclean's*, May 1974, 4.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

An editorial in the *Globe and Mail* also supported the legislation, arguing “the CFL’s Canadianness makes it worth preserving. . . Grey Cup week is the nearest thing this often-disjointed country has to a unifying, national festival. . . Without government protection, the CFL—just as surely as telecommunications in Canada, our economy, even our country—would inevitably be swamped.”¹²⁹ The *Toronto Star* argued that Canadian football is “a piece of the Canadian cultural fabric which still enjoys the luxury of being able to be saved.”¹³⁰ An article in the *Montreal Gazette* agreed with Lalonde, reasoning that protecting the CFL was no different than the protection of Canadian radio, magazines and television.¹³¹ Supportive editorials also appeared in the *Windsor Star*, *London Free Press*, and *Ottawa Citizen*.¹³² Magazines, newspapers and radio in Canada firmly supported the ruling Liberals on this Bill as a matter of fighting for Canadian sovereignty. The *Toronto Sun* continued to be one of the lone dissenting voices as it featured an editorial opposing this policy.¹³³

Public attitudes were mixed. While an *Ottawa Citizen* poll found two-thirds of respondents backed Lalonde, a Gallup survey found that only 40 percent supported the

¹²⁹ “Preserving the CFL,” *Globe and Mail*, April 9, 1974, 8.

¹³⁰ “Blowing the Whistle on U.S. Football,” *Toronto Star*, April 11, 1974, B4.

¹³¹ Tim Burke, “Three Cheers for Marc Lalonde,” *Montreal Gazette*, April 4, 1974, 37.

¹³² “WFL challenge defies Ottawa,” *Windsor Star*, April 2, 1974, 8; “Lalonde set to return the kick,” *London Free Press*, April 2, 1974, 6; “Keep it Canadian,” *Ottawa Citizen*, April 4, 1974, 6.

¹³³ “Sleeper Play,” *Toronto Sun*, April 2, 1974, 10. However, a column in the *Toronto Sun* by True Davidson on the opposite page of the editorial expressed support for the Bill calling the Bassetts “un-Canadian.” See True Davidson, *Toronto Sun*, April 2, 1974, 11.

Liberal government and polls in Toronto showed a lack of support for the Bill.¹³⁴ A slight majority of the Letters to the Editor in the Toronto papers were opposed to the proposed legislation. The divide between the two solitudes was evident again. Polls in Montreal demonstrated a lack of support for the legislation and the Sports Director for the *Montreal Star* labeled it “the silliest and most discriminatory piece of legislation ever proposed in Canada.”¹³⁵ Lalonde was a guest on the national CBC radio show “Cross Country Checkup,” where almost two-thirds of callers supported the football bill. The CBC had organized a phone-in poll in conjunction with the radio show. More than 500 callers voted in just over an hour and seventy-one percent of callers were in favour of the legislation. One listener from Halifax said watching the CFL made him “feel connected with the rest of the country.”¹³⁶

While the debate was largely nationalistic, sometimes the question moved away from nation-building to economics. It was surprising, considering that professional football was still a business, that economic arguments had not been more prominent. Now, in an attempt to gain support from the economic perspective, the Department of National Health and Welfare released evidence that the Toronto WFL team would result

¹³⁴ “No to WFL,” *Ottawa Citizen*, April 4, 1974, 47; Gallup Canada Poll, Poll #365, May 1974 <http://odesi1.scholarsportal.info>; Dick Beddoes, “By Dick Beddoes,” *Globe and Mail*, April 27, 1974, 41; “Northmen favored in poll,” *Toronto Sun*, March 21, 1974, 53.

¹³⁵ J. Pezzola, “West will get best of Lalonde’s decision,” *Montreal Star*, April 2, 1974, A19.

¹³⁶ CBC Radio, *Cross Country*.

in a loss of more than one million dollars in tax revenue.¹³⁷ This was the first time an economic argument had been raised during the debate.

An economic rationale for federal government support would have been in keeping with the Trudeau government's cultural industrialism, the third phase in Ryan Edwardson's analysis of successive stages in Canadian cultural policy. The government had de-emphasized its original focus on supporting high culture because of its elitist overtones. The overt nationalist criteria had proved unworkable due to the elusive and controversial question of what it meant to be Canadian and the constraints imposed on the liberal value of freedom of expression. It was more expedient politically to view culture as a business, much like any other. Professional football, like the television industry or book publishing, could be viewed as simply another type of business to be protected because it strengthened Canada by creating jobs and generating wealth.

The government's intervention into Canadian professional football made the front-page of Canadian newspapers, and was covered on television and radio news. The massive media coverage devoted to this issue surprised Lalonde. "I could spend \$500-million and not get a complaint," he observed. "It's this one that has brought me more criticism than anything else I've done."¹³⁸ As Health Minister, Lalonde was about to table a paper proposing a dramatic shift in health care emphasizing prevention to cut medical costs. The paper eventually influenced policy making around the world, but was ignored

¹³⁷ LAC, Office of the Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare – Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch – Sports – Football, 1974/03-1975/01, RG29, Vol. 1571, newspaper article entitled "Taxpayers Losers in Northmen deal."

¹³⁸ Geoffrey Stevens, "mad, mad, mad," *Globe and Mail*, April 4, 1974, 6.

by the media in Canada as the focus remained on football.¹³⁹ Others also felt that too much attention was devoted to a banal issue. *Globe and Mail* columnist Geoffrey Stevens argued that “Lalonde is carrying out the most fundamental; and expensive reform ever undertaken by the Trudeau government in restructuring the social welfare policy that will affect every Canadian,” but nobody noticed as so much attention was devoted to football.¹⁴⁰ Marc Lalonde was responsible for administering one-third of the federal budget, but it was his commitment to football that placed him on the national stage.¹⁴¹ Said Lalonde, “I could not have attracted more attention if I had personally chosen to be a streaker through the League of Decency’s annual fundraising dinner.”¹⁴²

Lalonde continued to work behind the scenes to strengthen the Canadianness of the CFL. He was supporting expansion to other parts of Canada, in particular trying to get Hamilton to drop its territorial exemption to allow a new team to be based in London. Officials representing the Hamilton team were opposed to an expansion team in Southern Ontario as the Hamilton team drew some of its fan support from London and surrounding area.¹⁴³ Lalonde also wanted more people to be able to watch CFL games and requested that the new owner of the Argonauts drop the television blackout of sold-out Argo

¹³⁹ André Picard, “A Moment in Time: Lalonde Calls for Shift in Illness Prevention,” *Globe and Mail*, May 1, 2014, A2.

¹⁴⁰ Stevens, “mad, mad, mad,” *Globe and Mail*, April 4, 1974, 6.

¹⁴¹ Fitz-Gerald, “Lesser Known Bills,” *National Post*, February 8, 2008, B11.

¹⁴² “A battle in court isn’t ruled out. . .,” *Toronto Sun*, March 17, 1974, S3.

¹⁴³ Hal Walker, “Hal Walker,” *Calgary Herald*, Feb 22, 1974, 28.

games.¹⁴⁴ Even Prime Minister Trudeau raised the question of whether the CBC, the Canadian public broadcaster, should continue to broadcast American NFL games while the CFL was struggling.¹⁴⁵

The President of the WFL, Gary Davidson, also entered the debate, emphasizing the differences between the two countries while still referring to the nationalism that was at the heart of the issue. “If the Canadian Government blocks the WFL’s entry into Canada, the WFL will not honor CFL player contracts. We may have to go to court over it, but we will be in an American court fighting for American boys, so I don’t think we’ll have much trouble.”¹⁴⁶ Davidson offered league support for a legal challenge and threatened to get the US government involved.¹⁴⁷ The owner of the Southern California team also was surprised at the government intervention arguing it was “inconceivable that the [Canadian] Government would ban competition.”¹⁴⁸ The talk of lawsuits and government legislation meant that football would not be contested just on the field, but could very well be decided by lawyers and elected officials.

The Bassetts would not waver in their attempts to sway Lalonde. Toronto Metro Chairman Paul Godfrey flew to Ottawa to meet with Lalonde to present him with a compromise solution in an attempt to prevent the introduction of the Bill. He had already

¹⁴⁴ Dick Beddoes, “Toronto Northmen Hope for NDP blocking as Lalonde Introduces Bill to Boot Them Out,” *Globe and Mail*, April 11, 1974, 35.

¹⁴⁵ Canadian Press, “Trudeau may ask CBC for TV ban on NFL,” *Toronto Star*, March 16, 1974, A5.

¹⁴⁶ Dick Beddoes, “By Dick Beddoes,” *Globe and Mail*, April 4, 1974, 46.

¹⁴⁷ Eaton Howitt, “Bassett threatens war . . .,” *Toronto Sun*, March 21, 1974, 53.

¹⁴⁸ Trueman, “Hodgson Angry,” *Globe and Mail*, April 24 1974, 34.

met with the federal Liberals from Toronto, failing in his attempt to influence them. He reiterated to Lalonde the compromises promised by Northmen lawyer Herb Solway. However, Lalonde was unwavering.¹⁴⁹ One last attempt was made to save the Northmen before the Bill was raised in the House of Commons. In his last ditch effort John Bassett Jr. issued a press release after meeting with the President of the WFL, inviting all the CFL teams to join the WFL. This, he felt, was an opportunity for the Canadian league to grow in status by joining an American league. The idea was rejected.¹⁵⁰

6.5 The Bill

On April 10, Minister of Health and Welfare Marc Lalonde rose in the House of Commons and introduced Bill C-22: An Act Respecting Canadian Professional Football. The Bill emphasized the nation-building and cultural aspect of Canadian football. It referred to football as having a long established tradition in Canada, describing it as “a unique national institution contributing to the strengthening of the bonds of nationhood.” Furthermore, the Bill stated, “it is in the national and public interest that an effort be made to protect this institution from the encroachments of foreign-sponsored enterprises extending into Canada.” The final version of the Bill increased the number of Canadians in the league, stipulating that imports must comprise less than 40 percent of players on a team. It also stated that no Canadian league could have a team from outside Canada, league games featuring a foreign team could not be played in Canada, and a Canadian

¹⁴⁹ “Godfrey can’t save Northmen,” *Toronto Star*, April 9, 1974, 1.

¹⁵⁰ “CFL invited to join WFL: Bassett,” *Globe and Mail*, April 18, 1974, 45.

team could not play a league game outside Canada. Punishment for non-compliance was to be a maximum of two years in jail for the franchise owner.¹⁵¹

The Bill was proposed at a time of great economic turbulence in Canadian society. The same day the Bill was introduced in the House, the highest ever peacetime increase in the Consumer Price Index was recorded. The country was plagued by inflation of 10.4 percent, gripped by a housing crisis that featured mortgage rates greater than 10 percent, and troubled by labour unrest that included numerous strikes or threats of job action by air traffic controllers, workers on the St Lawrence Seaway, postal workers and firefighters. As the country was entering a time of economic turmoil, the federal government was preoccupied with professional football. It seemed that voters were similarly preoccupied. After a constituency meeting, Liberal External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp concluded that football was the biggest concern among voters, surpassing inflation and the energy crisis.¹⁵² There were seventeen items on the docket for debate, but the Liberals moved the Football Bill to highest priority. This was attacked by Toronto Conservative MP Reg Stackhouse. “When the Minister of National Health and Welfare gives priority to a bill such as this we must think that he is now becoming the Mr. Bumble of Canadian politics.”¹⁵³

On April 18, during second reading, Lalonde rose in the house. He spoke for more than one hour on the proposed Bill. Prime Minister Trudeau returned early from a vacation to be present in the House when the Bill was read. Lalonde stated that he

¹⁵¹ Canada, Bill C22, 5.

¹⁵² Connie Nicolson, “Northmen issue tops in Toronto,” *Toronto Sun*, April 4, 1974, 41.

¹⁵³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 22, 1974, 1659.

regretted that the well-known federal policy regarding American teams and American leagues had not prevented the WFL from invading Canada, and as a result the government was forced to act. He also commented on the incredible interest Canadians had in this issue, and he compared football to other areas of Canadian culture, and the struggle for both to survive with America next door:

In its own small way, this football controversy seems to epitomize the central dilemmas of our 100 years as a nation. The type of debate we have been witnessing seems to me symbolic of our history too. . . We are told that the state should not interfere with private business. . . As Canadians we have always had to acknowledge the consequences of living alongside a much richer and more powerful neighbour. We have always had to be aware of what could happen, and, in some instance, what has happened by allowing our neighbour unrestricted access to what is ours . . . too often in the past, the demise or disappearance of Canadian institutions in the face of much greater economic and demographic powers. This, then, is one of our traditional dilemmas as Canadians: how to remain open to, but not dominated by, the influence of our great neighbour. Ever since Confederation we have tried to resolve that dilemma by taking conscious decisions at the federal level, either to impose restraints on foreign influences or to create or maintain institutions of our own.¹⁵⁴

Lalonde referred to the railway and broadcasting as examples of government intervention to create institutions and control or regulate foreign domination, and implied that football

¹⁵⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 18, 1974, 1562.

was no different. He was raising Canadian symbols in an attempt to invoke the spirit of nationalism to try to sway support for protecting something that he argued was an important part of Canadian culture. He declared that there is

nothing unprecedented or arbitrary in the government's present action to protect Canadian football . . . the legislation now before the House is in fact no different in principle from legislation that already protects many other Canadian enterprises. . . . the most staunch advocate of free enterprise would agree there are times when the government must be prepared to protect the legitimate interest of all Canadians.¹⁵⁵

As Lalonde's speech progressed, it grew even more political. He stated that the west, making a compromise for the common good of Canada, had agreed to sell oil at reduced prices to the east, so the east could compromise and do a favour for the west. He quoted a Montreal sportswriter critical of the Liberal government for forcing Canadians to watch "an inferior brand of football simply because people living in smaller cities can't afford big-league entertainment," to which Lalonde responded "[t]he basic assumption here seems to be that, if it is Canadian it is inferior—an assumption I for one am not prepared to accept."¹⁵⁶

Lalonde argued that, since this was an issue that affected all parts of Canada and all Canadians, it should rightfully be decided by Parliament. He argued that Parliament would act in a variety of ways to help Canadian football at all levels, increasing support to minor football, offering football scholarships for Canadians, and reducing blackouts so

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 18, 1974, 1563.

Canadian fans could watch the CFL on television. He proposed a more Canadian CFL, with more Canadian players and additional teams in London, Halifax, Quebec City and Victoria. He promised unprecedented federal government intervention to save a professional sport in Canada.¹⁵⁷

Lalonde suggested that the reasons were straightforward. The CFL was the only completely Canadian-controlled professional sports league; it consisted solely of Canadian teams and the majority of its players were Canadian. It had deep roots in communities and demonstrated civic and provincial pride. And, of course, the Grey Cup was a key element in the creation of national unity and nation-building. “Hockey got away from us a long time ago,” he stated, and there had never been a Canadian baseball league to support or protect.¹⁵⁸

During the debates in the House of Commons, Lalonde conjured up nationalist history, raised the Laurentian Thesis, and questioned the potential consequences had John A. Macdonald not invoked his own protectionist and interventionist National Policy in the country’s formative years.

Without such conscious decisions we would have no national railway system . . . our railways would probably run north and south along what we are told are natural geographic lines . . . we would today have no national broadcasting system and our radio and TV stations would likely be local affiliates of NBC or CBS.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1564

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 1563

He further justified protectionism by saying that “the decisions to create and maintain our own Canadian systems, even with the extra costs involved, were seen, correctly, as part of the price of national sovereignty.”¹⁶⁰

During his introduction Lalonde had successfully wrapped Canadian football in the Maple Leaf flag and associated the Canadian Football League with historical events such as John A. Macdonald’s National Policy, the building of the railway, and the creation of the CBC and the Wheat Board. MPs compared the CFL to the Canadian film industry, Canadian magazines, and book publishing, making this another debate about the protection of Canadian culture. This nationalistic flag-waving reflected the Liberal preoccupation with nationalism and national unity. Canadian sovereignty, it was argued, was at stake. A vote against the Bill would be a vote against Canada. Journalist Ken McKee, wrote “Canadian nationalism . . . is the CFL’s strongest card. It’s one reason why Commissioner Gaudaur, said he felt he ‘dealt from strength.’”¹⁶¹ The opposition argued that the CFL was a business, not Canadian culture, but the Liberals countered that most of the teams were not-for-profit community-owned entities. In response to charges that the free market must be preserved, Liberals argued “[while] free enterprise was to be valued. . . even its most vocal opponents would concede that governments must be prepared to intervene on occasion to protect the legitimate interests of all Canadians.”¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 1562.

¹⁶¹ Ken McKee, “CFL growing Pains,” *CFL ’74 Official Yearbook*, ed. Gord Walker (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1974), 39.

¹⁶² Cosentino, *A Passing Game*, 81.

Regionalism and anti-Americanism were also evident in the debate. Les Benjamin, NDP MP from Saskatchewan, suggested “if Mr. Bassett wants to make a few more bucks out of football, he can damn well go to the United States and become an American citizen and make his bucks down there, and leave our Canadian football alone. . . . for God’s sake can’t we have something of our own?”¹⁶³ He urged all western members, even Conservatives, to support the Bill. Lalonde seemed to have support from the NDP and even some western conservatives, but he felt that Toronto MPs, even Liberals, would vote against the bill.¹⁶⁴

Subsequent debate meant that the House spent almost two hours discussing football on the first day. Parliamentarians were back the next day and debated the Bill for more than three hours. Despite the social concerns facing many Canadians, Parliamentarians were being inundated with mail on this issue.¹⁶⁵ During the second day’s debates, the Bill was once again compared to historic government interventions in the areas of industry, communications, and culture in an effort to justify the government’s role in seeking to protect Canadian sovereignty once more. The themes of the debate began to mirror those of historical debates on Canadian nationalism and unity: West vs. East, the Rest of Canada vs Quebec and feelings of anti-Americanism.

¹⁶³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 18, 1974, 1571.

¹⁶⁴ “Godfrey can’t save Northmen,” *Toronto Star*, April 9, 1974, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 19, 1974, 1585.

When Alberta Conservative MP Joe Clark accused the Liberals of making a trade of western oil for eastern support of football, his patriotism was questioned.¹⁶⁶ Clark questioned the Liberal emphasis on nationalism and Canadian identity, arguing it is “misleading to suggest [the league] possesses a Canadian identity so distinctive as to be placed in priority as a protection of Canadian culture.”¹⁶⁷ He argued that this situation was not like the CBC, National Film Board, or Canadian Film Development Corporation, because it was prohibiting American culture instead of promoting Canadian culture. Clark questioned whether the CFL was truly Canadian with its reliance on American, players, coaches and administrators.¹⁶⁸

Long-time Toronto NDP MP Andrew Brewin stated, “[i]f [the CFL] is the symbol of Canadian nationalism, I say Canadian nationalism is pretty sick. If we have to borrow, as our symbol, a game which everybody knows . . . is thoroughly Americanized. . . and defend that as the symbol of our nationalism, our nationalism is in a pretty poor state.”¹⁶⁹ Said MP Brewin, “[t]o pretend that the maintenance of the Canadian Football League is essential to Canadian unity, Canadian culture or Canadian nationalism is one of the phoniest things I’ve ever heard.”¹⁷⁰ His point was that the Canadian game had already been so Americanized that a distinctive form of Canadian culture wasn’t really being protected.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 1588.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 1590.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 1590.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 1594.

¹⁷⁰ William Johnson, “Football Bill Called Reflection of ‘Fortress Canada’ Mentality,” *Globe and Mail*, April 19, 1974, 1.

Coupled with the anti-Toronto sentiment was the fear of upsetting Quebec, which the government was very careful not to do. It was suggested in the House by independent member from Quebec Roch La Salle that Lalonde would not have blocked a WFL franchise if the team was to play in Montreal.¹⁷¹ René Matte, Social Credit MP from Quebec, stood in the house on the third day of debate and argued French-Canadians were not interested in football, so this was just an English waste of time.¹⁷² For one of the only occasions in his career, the perfectly bilingual Lalonde made his introductory speech almost entirely in English, ignoring French-speaking Canada and speaking mostly to English-Canada, and the west.¹⁷³

Some thought that devoting so much time to a debate on sport was absurd. Norval Horner, a PC MP from football-mad Saskatchewan, stated

[t]he Treasury Board has just received word that the air traffic controllers will go on strike at midnight, on Sunday, and here we are, arguing whether we should protect the monopoly of the Toronto Argonauts. ... The country is saddled with strikes. The railways are fifty-six million bushels behind in grain deliveries. People in the world are starving because we cannot deliver wheat. . . and we talk about football.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 19, 1974, 1602.

¹⁷² Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 22, 1974, 1633.

¹⁷³ Johnson, "Football Bill," *Globe and Mail*, April 19, 1974, 1.

¹⁷⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 19, 1974, 1594.

Former journalist Peter Reilly, PC MP from Ottawa, said with high unemployment, and inflation, and a postal strike, it was ludicrous to debate football in the house. “[A]t a time when more than half a million people are out of work, at a time when inflation is at an all-time high, at a time when the country is very close to being paralyzed by strikes in the public sector.”¹⁷⁵

A filibuster was threatened on the bill. Douglas Roche, PC MP from Edmonton, was critical of the Liberals for focusing on football “when the country is crippled with transportation and postal strikes, layoffs are multiplying, flood waters are rampaging in the west, housing prices are scandalously high and inflation is savaging the economy.”¹⁷⁶ Representatives from all three parties acknowledged that football had become a nagging political worry of surprising proportions and one unnamed Liberal cabinet minister from Toronto confided that he felt the bill could cost him his seat in the next election, which was thought to be imminent.¹⁷⁷

On the third day of debate, parliamentarians debated for another four hours. At the close of the debate PC MP Reg Stackhouse argued that this was a political move designed to win votes in the West and wrap the Liberals in the flag prior to an election campaign.¹⁷⁸ Conservative opposition members argued the league was not really Canadian or important to Canadian identity. The point was raised that while the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 1599.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 1594.

¹⁷⁷ Gray, “Conservative Plans Filibuster,” *Toronto Star*, April 20, 1974, A4.

¹⁷⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 22, 1974, 1660

government was blocking American football in Toronto, an arm's-length government agency, the CBC, was bringing American football to Canadians every week, which the government did nothing to prevent.

On the fourth day of debate, while the House voted in Ottawa, a rally organized by Toronto Fans for Football, a group supporting the WFL franchise, was held at Toronto City Hall. The group distributed bumper stickers that read "Save the North(men)—Kick out Marxist government."¹⁷⁹ This underlined the fact that free enterprise versus state intervention was also an issue. Michael Dawson suggests that, because of the Cold War, consumers in Canada were starting to view government intervention as a threat to personal and political freedom. Canadians felt entitled to the right to leisure, free of state interference.¹⁸⁰ Bassett went to court seeking a ruling to determine if the federal government was acting within its jurisdiction.

The Liberals were in a minority situation with 109 seats, and support for the Bill in a House vote was not assured. Lalonde felt that people in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal were divided, but the mail to his office showed a majority in favour of the legislation, while polls and talk-shows suggested a strong positive response in favour of the government's position.¹⁸¹ At a time of economic dislocation, unprecedented inflation

¹⁷⁹ Len Coates, "Football Bill Opponents Held to a Draw at Forum," *Toronto Star*, April 25, 1974, C1.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Dawson, "Leisure, Consumption, and the Public Sphere: Postwar Debates Over Shopping Regulations in Vancouver and Victoria during the Cold War," in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1945-75*, ed. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 201-5.

¹⁸¹ LAC, Cabinet Documents, 770-69, RG2 2006-1062, Vol. 6461, Box 6, File 136-75, Marc Lalonde, memorandum to Cabinet, "Protection of Canadian Football Bill C-22," dated February 27, 1975.

and labour strife, the final vote on the Football Bill was 118 in favour and ninety-two opposed. The NDP supported the Bill and the government, with nineteen members voting in favour and three opposed. All Liberals except for one MP from Toronto voted for the Bill, and two Conservatives voted in favour of the Bill, including Steve Paproski, a former CFL player representing Edmonton. Despite the widespread belief, shared by Lalonde, that MPs from Montreal and Toronto would oppose the legislation, Toronto MPs voted fourteen to eight for the Bill. A *Montreal Gazette* editorial was also supportive and all Montreal MPs voted in favour.¹⁸² If the Bill passed third reading it would be sent to the Senate before being enacted into law. To prevent this from happening, Conservative MPs organized a filibuster by introducing more than 60 amendments.¹⁸³ The Bassetts were not in Canada for the vote. They were travelling to Buffalo, Louisville, Charlotte, Seattle and Memphis in search of a new home for their WFL football team.

6.6 Post-Bill

The public and the House both supported the Bill to protect the Canadian border from more American incursions. Opposition MPs had made a strong case that the CFL was not part of Canadian culture as it was American-dominated and therefore not worthy of protection. There were no Canadian head coaches or general managers, and almost

¹⁸² “Timely Football Vote,” *Montreal Gazette*, April 25, 1974, 8.

¹⁸³ John Gray, “Bill To Bar WFL Passes First Test But Filibuster Ahead,” *Toronto Star*, April 24, 1974, A1.

half the players on each team were American. Academic Bruce Kidd, writing in *Canadian Dimension*, supported the Bill and this attempt to protect Canadian culture, arguing that Canadian football and the Grey Cup were culturally important to Canadians.¹⁸⁴ However, he also suggested that football in Canada had become a major vehicle for American imperialism. The CFL passed the Designated Import Rule in 1970 which penalized teams for playing a Canadian at quarterback.¹⁸⁵ In addition, a study by Donald Ball from the University of Victoria demonstrated that Canadian players in the CFL were behind Americans in pay and prestige and were “stacked” into certain positions, usually the least important. Ball went so far as to label Canadian players “White Niggers.”¹⁸⁶ Despite Liberal support recognizing the importance of Canadian football, these examples made one question how important Canadians were to the CFL.

After the vote, Montreal Alouette owner Sam Berger, a supporter of CFL expansion to the United States, put his team up for sale. People in Montreal, he maintained, “wish to see in Montreal the best in any sport and that this can be furnished by either a WFL or an NFL team. They have had excellence in hockey and baseball and they want the same

¹⁸⁴ Bruce Kidd, “An Intercepted Pass,” *Canadian Dimension*, June 1974, 11-2.

¹⁸⁵ The Designated Import rule penalized teams using a Canadian QB by limiting the number of times the QB could be substituted if he was Canadian. There were no such limits if the QB was American. In 1980 the Liberal government met with the CFL in an effort to remove the designated import rule. See LAC, Sport Canada – Sport program – Football – Pro football, RG29, Vol. 3181, File 7125-Foot-13, letter from Marc Lalonde to Jake Gaudaur dated May 22, 1980.

¹⁸⁶ Donald Ball, “Ascription and Position: A Comparative Analysis of “Stacking” in Professional Football,” *Canadian Review of Sociology* 10, no. 2 (May 1973): 97–113. The “White Niggers” comment is taken from the title of a book written by Pierre Vallières, a leader of the Front de libération du Québec, a separatist group in Quebec. Vallières used the term in reference to the French Canadians in Canada. The book compares the exploitation of French Canadians to that of blacks in the American south. Ball was referring to the exploitation of Canadians in the CFL. See Pierre Vallières, *White Niggers of America* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969).

thing in football and they will not be content with anything less.”¹⁸⁷ Hockey and baseball had American teams, while Canadian football did not. Berger felt that Montrealers would view the CFL as second-rate entertainment if it needed protection from the federal government.

It was easy to conclude that the CFL was second-rate because it employed a quota for Canadian players, suggesting that they needed protection from superior foreign competition. The American market was larger, richer, and more powerful. Similarly the CFL was considered inferior because capitalism dictated that profits reflected quality. CFL teams were not as profitable as American NFL teams and players were not paid as much as in other professional sports. The fact that the majority of teams were community-owned instead of owned by powerful billionaires, multinationals or media companies also fed the feelings of inferiority. Community ownership in a capitalistic society seemed quaint instead of world-class. The fact that the stadiums were smaller and older also supported the argument that the CFL was substandard. Canadian football’s long history and attachment to Canada were impressive, but in a globalized world where consumers wanted instant access to “world-class” entertainment, tradition could be a liability.¹⁸⁸ Many Canadians dismissed the CFL because it was not the NFL. Some followed it for the same reason. The CFL was a national sporting league in an

¹⁸⁷ LAC, Office of the Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare – Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch – Sports – Football, 1974/03-1975/01, RG29, Vol. 1571, File Part 5, 32, speech by Sam Berger, April 29, 1974.

¹⁸⁸ Jeff Giles, *Bigger Balls: The CFL and Overcoming the Canadian Inferiority Complex* (Etobicoke: Winding Stair Press, 2001), 181.

international sporting culture that equates international as most desirable. As a national league it could only attract a national audience, which meant it must be inferior.¹⁸⁹

In introducing Bill C-22, Lalonde had confronted the inferiority complex. The CFL teams in Toronto and Montreal, two cities that aspired to “world-class” status, would attempt to combat this attitude by signing high-profile American stars such as Joe Theismann, Anthony Davis, Tom Cousineau and Vince Ferragamo. These attempts were very expensive and almost always unsuccessful. The media in Montreal were still infatuated with an NFL team and Mayor Drapeau was still working furiously for a franchise, saying “When we get our new Olympic Stadium built and we want a franchise in the National Football League, Lalonde, Gaudaur or nobody is going to stop us.”¹⁹⁰

In 1975 Mayor Drapeau lobbied the NFL to host the 1977 Super Bowl in Montreal’s new Olympic stadium.¹⁹¹ The next year the separatist Parti Québécois was elected. In 1977 almost 70,000 fans witnessed the Alouettes win the Grey Cup at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal. Two years later, Mayor Drapeau would attend the Super Bowl, still lobbying for an NFL franchise.¹⁹² In 1980, a referendum on sovereignty association was held. One year later the Alouettes were bankrupt and the team folded.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ See Giles, *Bigger Balls* for a more complete treatment of Canadian football and what he argues is the Canadian inferiority complex.

¹⁹⁰ George Hayes, “It’s NFL Sunday for George,” *The Woodstock Daily Sentinel Review*, November 26, 1976, 10.

¹⁹¹ Swift, “Fumble,” 34.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ In 1982 the team was revived as the Montreal Concordes, but folded after four seasons.

As the separatist movement gained political traction in French-Quebec, the rejection of a Canadian sport could be seen as a distancing from the rest of Canada. The end of the Montreal Alouette franchise reflected a socio-psychological separation between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Political separation was a difficult process; cultural distinctiveness was relatively easy to enact. Despite the impressive Canadian football tradition in Montreal, the decline in interest in an institution that represented Canada should not be surprising. It was just one of the many examples of politics affecting Canadian professional football and demonstrates in part why the federal government had worked so diligently in an effort to save the league.¹⁹⁴

One week after the vote on Lalonde's bill in the House of Commons, the Toronto Northmen administration announced that the WFL team was moving to Memphis. Marc Lalonde was called "the most important figure in the future of Canadian football."¹⁹⁵ Team owner John Bassett Jr.'s bitterness was evident when he said "[i]f an election is called, I hope the people of Toronto will remember that Lalonde denied them football of a superior quality."¹⁹⁶ On May 7th, the move to Memphis was made official and Bill C-22 was approved by Committee after all the Conservative amendments were rejected. Just

¹⁹⁴ Hayes, *Blue Jay Fever*, 167.

¹⁹⁵ Lawrence Martin, "The New League—At The Least, A Pain In The Pocketbook," *Globe and Mail*, August 26, 1974, S3.

¹⁹⁶ Herb Gluck, *While The Getting's Good: Inside The World Football League* (Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), 92. Once again the assumption was made by Bassett that because the game was American it would be superior. Author, academic and former professional football player Frank Cosentino witnessed a WFL game and concluded the quality was far below CFL play. See O'Brien, *Canadian Football League*, 18.

two days later, on May 9th, parliament was dissolved and a general election called. The bill died on the table.

Some members of the media felt that pursuing such a contentious bill when the government was in a minority position was political suicide, but in the subsequent federal election, there was no backlash.¹⁹⁷ The election took place two days before the Memphis Southmen won the opening game of the WFL season in front of a crowd of more than 30,000, including Elvis Presley. Like the Southmen, the Liberals were also victorious. The Liberals gained thirty-two seats and an increase of almost 5 percent of the vote to win a majority. West of Ontario the number of elected Liberals increased from seven to thirteen. Even in Toronto the Liberals won almost 80 percent of the seats. Voters did not penalize the party that saved the CFL. A re-elected Lalonde said that the reintroduction of the football bill would be very low on the government's list of priorities.¹⁹⁸

The Southmen finished in first place during the regular season and attracted more fans than any other WFL team. Bob Harris, who was denied a CFL expansion team in London, did not fare as well with his Portland-based team. The Internal Revenue Service padlocked the offices of the Portland Storm at the conclusion of the season. Harris told reporters he had lost more than a half-million dollars.¹⁹⁹ Despite its failure, the WFL had an impact on the CFL. The CFL lost a \$200,000 US television contract. Four times the

¹⁹⁷ John Gray, "Football May Split Parties," *Toronto Star*, April 10, 1974, 1.

¹⁹⁸ Dick Beddoes, "By Dick Beddoes," *Globe and Mail*, July 10, 1974, 32.

¹⁹⁹ The majority of teams could not meet payroll or even pay travel costs and laundry bills. Several teams moved cities mid-season and other teams simply folded. See Gluck, *While The Getting's Good*, for a more complete treatment of the season.

usual number of CFL players refused to re-sign with their CFL team in the hope of signing a more lucrative WFL contract. CFL salaries increased by 19 percent, putting a tremendous strain on smaller market teams.²⁰⁰ Attendance dropped in the CFL, possibly as a result of losing players. Commissioner Jake Gaudaur referred to 1974 as “the league’s most difficult year.”²⁰¹

The new majority Liberal government met in Ottawa for the first time in September of 1974, just days after the WFL held a league game in London, Ontario; an act that would have been punishable by jail time had Bill C-22 passed. Despite an announced crowd of more than 5,000 at the game, reports state that only about 2,000 tickets were sold and fans were so upset with the level of play they chanted “Where are the professionals?” and engaged in shouting matches with the players on the field.²⁰²

6.7 The Liberals “weren’t just blowing hot air.”

Even though the WFL was struggling and the NFL had promised to refrain from invading Canada, Lalonde felt that a risk to the CFL remained. There has been speculation that the Trudeau government was not serious about enacting Bill C-22, but

²⁰⁰ Gaudaur, *1974 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1975, 26

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁰² Canadian Press, “WFL flops at debut in London,” *Toronto Star*, September 3 1974, C1; World Football League, 1974 Team pages, Detroit Wheels, http://wfl.charlottehornetswfl.com/team_pages_1974/03.php.

that it had served as a threat to achieve the desired outcome.²⁰³ However, documents show that the Liberals “weren’t just blowing hot air.”²⁰⁴ By February of 1975 Lalonde had produced a memorandum expressing concern once again about an American professional football league expanding into Canada.²⁰⁵ Lalonde and the Liberal government would not let this issue pass. The WFL was struggling, but was still interested in Canadian locations. In addition, there was talk of a merger with the CFL in an effort to save both leagues. Lalonde was confident from his meetings with the CFL administration that the merger would not take place.²⁰⁶

Representatives from Lalonde’s office met with NFL administration, and threatened to re-introduce the football bill if the NFL considered expansion into Canada. The NFL responded articulating a policy that it would consider expansion into Canada only if acceptable to the federal government.²⁰⁷ In a memorandum produced on this issue, Lalonde expressed his apprehension:

Notwithstanding the fact that the threat to Canadian football has diminished somewhat because of these recent developments, there still remains a concern that

²⁰³ Many hold this view. See Beddoes, *By Dick Beddoes*, July 10, 1974, 32; Cheadle, “Feds once ready,” *Edmonton Journal*, November 16, 1995, D5.” See also Sean Fitz-Gerald, “A cultural icon at stake,” *National Post*, June 14, 2008, A1.

²⁰⁴ Cheadle, “Feds once ready,” *Edmonton Journal*, November 16, 1995, D5.

²⁰⁵ LAC, Cabinet Documents, 770-69, RG2 2006-1062, Vol. 6461, Box 6, File 136-75. Marc Lalonde, memorandum to Cabinet, “Protection of Canadian Football Bill C-22,” February 27, 1975.

²⁰⁶ LAC, Health – Sports – World Football League, RG 19, Vol. 5798, File 5942-05, Marc Lalonde, Memorandum to Cabinet dated February 27, 1975.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

the lack of any recent government declared position could be regarded as an unwillingness to become involved again in protecting Canadian football.²⁰⁸

Lalonde was concerned that someone could take advantage of this void to challenge the sincerity of the government's intention to protect Canadian football from foreign leagues. Since the dissolution of Parliament, correspondence showed public support in favour of the football bill at a rate of two-to-one.²⁰⁹ Lalonde felt there was still need for action on the part of the federal government to protect the CFL and the Grey Cup. He outlined four approaches: a reintroduction of the bill; a statement of federal government support for Canadian Football; a statement against government support; or finally simply ignoring the situation by saying nothing and possibly risking the perception that the government would no longer protect Canadian football. If the federal government chose the last option, Lalonde feared for the future of Canadian football. After consultations with the Department of Justice, Lalonde decided the best approach was to produce a carefully crafted policy statement reaffirming the federal government's position. In addition, he would ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare to inform officials from the NFL, WFL, and CFL that the football bill was still official policy, and that it would be re-introduced if necessary.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ LAC, Cabinet Documents, 770-69, RG2 2006-1062, Vol. 6461, Box 6, File 136-75. Marc Lalonde, Memorandum to Cabinet, "Protection of Canadian Football Bill C-22," February 27, 1975.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

By March, Lalonde had met with Cabinet three times to discuss the football bill and agreement was reached to contact officials from all three leagues informing them that the bill could be reintroduced.²¹¹ Lalonde then wrote to the commissioners of the WFL and NFL stating that the government's position had not changed regarding expansion into Canada and threatened to revive the football bill if necessary.²¹²

MPs were fielding complaints from constituents that the league had not honoured its commitments regarding expansion, lifting blackouts, and increasing the number of Canadian players.²¹³ Every concerned citizen that wrote to the federal government on this topic received a reply that articulated the reasons for government action:

Canadian football has been a favoured sport for over a hundred years and enjoys a unique place in our Canadian heritage. It is avidly followed by millions of Canadian fans from coast to coast with great regional fervour and deep local pride especially at Grey Cup time. . . It is the belief of this government that Canadian football is an important institution that brings together the East and the West thereby contributing to the unity of our nation and is therefore worthy of being preserved and protected. The government also believes that it must be prepared to intervene from time to time to protect the legitimate interests of all Canadians. Various actions have been taken in the past to control the operation of the private sector such as in banking,

²¹¹ LAC, Cabinet Minutes, 1 – 28 (CBM), RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6456, "Protection of Canadian Football," March 13, 1975, 8.

²¹² LAC, Fitness and Amateur Sport – Football – General, RG 29, Vol. 1761, 15-6-11 pt. 5. 1975-1977.

²¹³ Ibid.

foreign investment, broadcasting to name but a few and we believe that Canadian football should likewise be protected. Our history has shown that in situations where no action was taken to protect the integrity of our national institutions, these desirable forms soon became lost forever and succeeding generations of Canadians bemoan the fact that someone at some point in our history failed to stand up to be counted on these issues. I submit that Canadian football is sufficiently vital to our national interest that it behooves each and every one of us to keep it above other mundane interests; this is the position taken by this government.²¹⁴

In May, Lalonde outlined the federal government's policy regarding Canadian football in a letter to Commissioner Gaudaur:

The Government is still of the view that it is not in the public interest to permit foreign-sponsored football enterprises to enter Canada nor to allow the expansion of any Canadian professional football league outside Canada. If necessary, the Canadian Government is prepared to introduce appropriate legislation to protect the integrity and identity of Canadian professional football.²¹⁵

The letter concluded that the government had upheld its commitment, and now the CFL must do the same by Canadianizing the league, expanding to other parts of the country, increasing the number of Canadian players, and lifting blackouts when games are sold out so that more Canadians could watch CFL football. The federal government increased support to Canadian amateur football, and the CBC offered the owner of the Toronto

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ LAC, Sport Canada – Sport program – Football – Pro football, RG29, Vol. 3181, File 7125-Foot-13, Marc Lalonde letter to Jake Gaudaur, May 14, 1975.

Argonauts \$10,000 to lift the blackouts.²¹⁶ The offer was rejected because of pressure from the radio rights holders and loss of the potential in-stadium revenue.²¹⁷

Gaudaur, who had not acted on any of the government's requests, responded on behalf of the CFL, arguing that, if the government wanted an expansion team, it should fund a stadium as it did in Vancouver for the NHL hockey franchise. He countered that only two teams had been profitable the previous year, and so the league could not afford to add an extra Canadian player, and because attendance had declined the blackout could not be lifted as it would hurt attendance even more.²¹⁸ Lalonde replied in July of 1975, once again asking Gaudaur to implement changes to make the league more Canadian.²¹⁹

Gaudaur did not seem interested in following the government's recommendations, particularly on Canadian expansion. The CFL set the price of an expansion team at \$2.7 million. That was more than twice the sale price of the Montreal Alouettes and almost as much as the sale price of the Toronto Argonauts, the most valuable franchise in the league. Both of those sales were for teams fully staffed with personnel. In addition it was more than five-times the cost of a WFL franchise.²²⁰ In his *1971 Annual Report* Gaudaur

²¹⁶ LAC, Fitness and Amateur Sport – Football – General, RG 29, Vol. 1761, 15-6-11 pt. 5, Don Goodwin, Head of Sports at CBC, letter to Bill Hodgson, September 11, 1974.

²¹⁷ Ibid., Letter from Ann C. Jamieson, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Health & Welfare, September 9, 1974.

²¹⁸ Ibid., Letter from Jake Gaudaur to Marc Lalonde, May 26, 1975.

²¹⁹ Ibid., Letter from Marc Lalonde to Jake Gaudaur, July 9, 1975.

²²⁰ World Football League, 1974 Team Pages, Portland Storm, http://wfl.charlottehornetswfl.com/team_pages_1974/11.php.

had estimated that the expansion fee would be set at \$1 million.²²¹ By pricing an expansion team out of the market, the CFL administration was indicating that it was not interested in expansion.²²² Harris, the potential owner from London, offered to give up television, equalization, and Grey Cup revenue in exchange for a fee reduction but his proposal was rejected.²²³ Gaudaur had received what he needed from the federal government. Evidently he did not feel the need to keep his side of the bargain.

Journalist Lawrence Martin and others suggest that the CFL's lack of action was seen by the federal government as a betrayal, and as a result the Liberals became less inclined to protect the CFL, and eventually dropped the issue.²²⁴ In September of 1976 Lalonde was replaced as the Minister responsible for sport and his football bill disappeared from the political agenda.

Gaudaur wrote in the *1975 Annual Report* that "the League has more cause for concern as to its future viability than at any time in the past 10 years."²²⁵ He noted that professional sporting leagues such as the WHA and ABA were struggling and franchises in Major League Baseball and the NHL were losing money. At the start of the 1975 season, salaries were up an additional 12 percent, with the WFL still having an impact on

²²¹ Gaudaur, *1971 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1972, 4.

²²² Lawrence Martin, "London Plan Slapped Down," *Globe and Mail*, June 1, 1974, 49.

²²³ Dick Chubey, *Edmonton Sun*, June 7, 1974 article clipping contained in LAC, Office of the Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare – Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch – Sports – Football, 1974/03-1975/01. RG29. Vol. 1571.

²²⁴ Jim Hunt, "Facts and Comments," *Sports International*, September 1974, 14; Sullivan, *The Grey Cup Story*, 206; Martin, "The New League," *Globe and Mail*, August 26, 1974, S3. Hunt suggests that Lalonde was furious that the CFL did not uphold its end of the bargain and had priced a London expansion team so high that it would never occur.

²²⁵ Gaudaur, *1975 Canadian Football League Annual Report*, 1976, 4

the CFL. When the WFL eventually folded in 1975, part-way through its second season, Bassett's Memphis team had been one of the few stable franchises, both on the field and at the box office.

The federal government's support for the CFL became more tangible but more covert. In 1976, the CBC, bowing to political pressure, stopped showing NFL contests during the CFL season. That year an arm of the federal government started to sponsor the Grey Cup half-time show. Subsidies were easier to implement than regulation and could be structured as a regular business transaction. Each year, from 1976 to 1983, a different department of the federal government paid up to \$100,000 to sponsor the half-time or pre-game show and sometimes both. With the government paying for the half-time show it was able to preach to the largest television audience of the year whatever message it wanted: fitness, nationalism, or multiculturalism for example. Most of these shows were celebrations of Canadianness designed to promote unity and stoke feelings of nationalism. The CBC paid for television and radio broadcasting rights, which also helped the league survive. In addition to this state support, there was sponsorship from crown corporations such as VIA Rail or Canada Post that also financially supported a struggling Canadian institution.²²⁶

²²⁶ The specific amount of support can be found each year in Gaudaur's annual reports. The federal government continues to financially support the Grey Cup each year. The 2012 Grey Cup received \$5 million dollars from the federal government for one-hundredth anniversary celebrations. See Rick Westhead, Argonauts Take In Up To \$10M Profit, *Toronto Star*, November 27, 2012, S1. The 2014 Grey Cup received \$2.7 million from the federal government. See Andrew Bucholtz, "Imagine Dragons is first non-Canadian Grey Cup halftime act since 2007, which has many irked," 55 Yard Line, ca.sports.yahoo.com, October 3, 2014.

6.8 Conclusion

“Cultural industrialism” is the third and final phase of Edwardson’s chronological framework for understanding cultural policy in postwar Canada.²²⁷ The federal government became increasingly involved in subsidizing commercial cultural producers. In response to the national unity crisis, the government moved to provide greater support to music, books, magazines, television, movies, and newspapers as well as implement or strengthen Canadian content quotas. This involvement set the precedent for involvement in the private sector including the CFL. The interaction of various factors over time caused the CFL to become a metaphor for Canada. When it was threatened, the government acted to protect it.

At this time concerns about Americanization were growing and Canadian sovereignty was seemingly threatened. Fears of American economic domination joined the concern about cultural dominance as technological advances seemed to accelerate the Americanization of Canada. Cable television brought more American culture to Canadian living rooms. Movies, music and other forms of entertainment spilled even more easily through a porous border that, just as George Grant had written in *Lament for a Nation*, had become an anachronism. Other sports leagues did not have territories coextensive with the Canadian nation, nor did they have the community attachment. Canadian football, the Grey Cup and the CFL became symbols of the struggle for cultural sovereignty.

²²⁷ Edwardson, *Canadian Content*.

This third and most drastic intervention was, according to the Liberal government, simply consistent with other forms of cultural support, as well as the “Munro Doctrine” that had been publicly articulated. The Trudeau Liberals believed that federal government intervention into many areas of Canadian society was in the public interest. Stephen Clarkson called this time period “the apogee of [the state’s] attempt to construct a dominant territorial state and to slow integration [with the USA].”²²⁸ Federal government intervention into professional football was justified by this outlook and also was consistent with this dominant paradigm. This involvement occurred at a time when, on a global scale, government intervention into the area of professional sport was unheard of.

When the WFL threatened Canada’s territorial boundary and the nation, the government responded in unprecedented fashion. Marc Lalonde had continued John Munro’s initial quest to save what was perceived to be an important form of Canadian culture. Despite numerous major contributions in the Health portfolio, Lalonde seemed to only be associated with the football bill. The context of the time helps explain why the government was prepared to take such extreme measures. French and English nationalism and state intervention were peaking while threats to national unity proliferated and intensified. The minority Liberals were dependent on the NDP for support. This situation resulted in the NDP pressing the Liberals to implement several forms of cultural and economic protectionism. This dependence undoubtedly influenced the introduction of Bill C-22. At a time of significant social and economic problems in Canada, football was debated for hours in the House and seemed to dominate the federal government’s agenda.

²²⁸ Clarkson, *Uncle Sam and Us*, 25.

Bill C-22 is significant in that it reflected Canadian attitudes towards continentalism in the 1970s. The bill demonstrated the degree to which economic rationales were de-emphasized in favour of nationalism at this time. The economic contributions of football or of the Canadian Football League to Canada were rarely raised.

The extent to which the government was prepared to go to prevent American football from crossing the border is surprising. Threatening to change laws affecting broadcasting, taxation, immigration, trade and commerce, and even threatening incarceration for association with an American league or team, represented much more drastic means of support than most forms of Canadian cultural protection. Most forms of cultural policy support indigenous culture and provide freedom of choice. In this case an American cultural form was banned. Football seemed to be the last “Canadian” professional sport left, since hockey had “gotten away from us.” Support existed at that time for the government to intervene in the name of supporting a national institution while enjoying the political gains that could be realized by standing up against Americanization.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

By 1984, the Liberals had been in power for more than two decades, except for the nine months of Conservative government under Joe Clark in 1979. In the 1984 federal election, Brian Mulroney's Conservatives swept to power, winning the greatest number of seats in the House of Commons in Canadian history. The interventionist disposition that had characterized previous government policy would prevail no longer. In its stead arose a neoliberal paradigm that emphasized the free market, privatization and moving closer to the United States. From this point forward, the Canadian state would be leaner, meaner and less protectionistic.¹

Any kind of support for the CFL was no longer an option. The new government refused to enforce the laws preventing the pirating of cable signals, something the Liberals had routinely done.² The CFL continued to struggle but, unlike a decade earlier, this time when the commissioner went to the government for help he was rebuffed. In 1986 Commissioner Mitchell requested a grant of \$10 million, an interest free loan of \$20 million, and tax relief for owners of money-losing teams. Finance Minister Michael Wilson replied that subsidies "would run contrary to deficit reduction."³ The next year the CFL failed to come to an agreement with the CBC on broadcast rights. That same year Commissioner Mitchell wrote to Otto Jelinek, Minister of State for Fitness and

¹ Stephen Clarkson, "The Multi-centred State: Canadian Government under Globalizing Pressures," in *Who is Afraid of the State?: Canada in a World of Multiple Centres of Power*, ed. Gordon Smith and Daniel Wolfish (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 189.

² Cosentino, *A Passing Game*, 246.

³ Paul Hunter, "CFL sought \$40 million federal aid, brief shows," *Toronto Star*, May 21, 1989, G1.

Amateur Sport, expressing disappointment with the lack of advertising and sponsorship from government agencies and Crown Corporations.⁴

With federal government intervention on the wane, and the CFL struggling, conditions were favourable for the NFL to move in. In 1988 the NFL played an exhibition game in Montreal, something it had not done in almost two decades. The league staged a total of six such games over the next decade. In 1991 the NFL set up a spring football league called the World League of American Football (WLAF) that included teams in Europe, the United States and in Montreal, which was then without a CFL team. This would have been illegal under Bill C-22. When CFL CEO Roy McMurtry met with Jean Charest, Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, to express concern, McMurtry did not receive any support.⁵

In November 1992, close to financial collapse, the CFL announced grandiose plans to expand to American markets, an act that also would have been prohibited by the football bill. Opposition Liberal MP Lloyd Axworthy submitted a private member's bill to reintroduce the Football Bill but was unsuccessful.⁶ In a neoliberal context, continentalization was seen not only as progressive, but unavoidable. To be perceived as "major league," the CFL needed to expand to the United States, an idea that the league had opposed for years. For almost a century, the league had resisted Americanization,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Cosentino, *A Passing Game*, 273.

⁶ This private member's bill was not selected in the lottery and therefore was never voted on. See Canadian Press, "Manitoba MP wants to axe CFL expansion into US," *Ottawa Citizen*, November 29, 1992, C2.

including rules. Now it was planning to move into American cities. American President Bill Clinton gave Prime Minister Mulroney, described as “an avid National Football League fan,” a jacket from the Dallas Cowboys, known as America’s team.⁷

The league’s expansion to the US upset many traditional CFL fans particularly when there was talk of changing the league’s name and rules.⁸ However other fans were excited about the success of the Baltimore franchise and how some American fans expressed a preference for Canadian football over the American game.⁹

In 1994, when, for the first time a team from outside Canada qualified to participate in *the* Canadian national sporting event, the Grey Cup. Liberal Jean Chrétien, Mulroney’s successor as prime minister, was asked to predict who would win. For decades, Prime Ministers and Governors General had graced the hallowed Canadian institution with their presence, performing ceremonial kick-offs, tossing the coin or presenting the trophy. Prime Minister Chrétien answered the question with a quick “Who’s playing?”

Times had changed. In the quarter century that followed the Second World War, the Canadian state had been increasingly active in many areas of Canadian society. Now globalization and neoliberalism had taken root and the state would play less of a role. As Marc Lalonde stated, “it was a different time.”¹⁰ Less than two decades earlier Chrétien’s party, and some of his closest political associates, had been deeply involved with

⁷ Graham Fraser, “PM, Clinton agree generally, but not entirely,” *Globe and Mail*, February 6, 1993, A1.

⁸ Kupfer, “Crabs in the Grey Cup, 56.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 59, 61.

¹⁰ Marc Lalonde, telephone conversation with author, September 23, 2013.

supporting the CFL. In that era of peak nationalism, the CFL was important because it was synonymous with the nation. Many Canadians viewed it as “theirs.” As NHL hockey was drifting south and globalizing, the CFL by default represented the only major sport organized along national lines.¹¹ This new ideological climate featuring less federal government involvement was such a contrast that it highlights how different policy regimes are the products of particular conjunctions of circumstances.

One year later, in 1995, the unthinkable happened. An American-based team won the Canadian football championship, the Grey Cup. The threat of federal government intervention in the 1970s had protected Canadian football from Americanization. Now, in 1995, a team from Baltimore had possession of Canada’s iconic national trophy. Yet it was a brief aberration. The next year all of the American teams folded. The CFL returned to its traditional nine-team all-Canadian format with a renewed sense of nationalism demonstrated by a marketing campaign that called the league “Radically Canadian.”

Today, Canadian football has rebounded and is no longer in need of protection.¹² A survey found that the Grey Cup is considered the most important annual event in Canada.¹³ Another poll asking Canadians what national institutions or icons helped them

¹¹ Between 1991 and 1994 the NHL added four more American teams and in 1995 and 1996 two Canadian teams relocated to American markets.

¹² When officials from the city of Toronto attempted to obtain an NFL franchise in 2008 Liberal Senator Larry Campbell re-introduced a version of the Football Bill in the Senate (Bill S-238). NDP opposition member Peter Julian re-proposed the Football Bill in 2009 (Bill C-423), 2010 (Bill C-423), 2011 (Bill C-360), and 2013 (Bill C-360) under the same circumstances.

¹³ Bruce Johnstone, “Survey finds Grey Cup King of Canada’s Annual Events,” *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, June 30, 2012, B1. Other events in the top three include the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto and the Calgary Stampede.

define being Canadian positioned the CFL in third place.¹⁴ A 2007 survey concluded the CFL is “one of the very few institutions on which English and French-Canadians have a common view. So the old adage about the Grey Cup being the most unifying symbol in the country, [is] still true.” The same survey concluded that “being a CFL fan or supporter is in some small way an expression of being Canadian.”¹⁵ Many Canadians agree that Canadian football is more than just a sport, and that the Grey Cup and CFL have become integral parts of Canadian culture. A 2014 survey found that the majority of Canadians feel that the Grey Cup is an important aspect of Canadian culture and identity.¹⁶ The popularity of Canadian football can even challenge hockey. In 2013, more people on average watched CFL football games than NHL games aired nationally on *The Sports Network* (TSN).¹⁷

A long-term factor that resulted in federal government intervention on three occasions between 1962 and 1974 was the way Canadian football had become closely associated with the nation. Nationalists supported Canadian football because it had evolved over time along with the nation and developed a distinctly Canadian identity. The CFL reinforced the idea of nation better than any other sports league in Canada because it occupied the country in multiple ways. Like Canada as a whole, the Canadian Football League was organized on an east-west basis with historic ties to nation-binding

¹⁴ Giles, *Bigger Balls*, 18. The Order of Canada and the beaver were ahead of the CFL.

¹⁵ David Naylor, “Standing on Guard for Thee,” *Globe and Mail*, November 24, 2007, S1-S2.

¹⁶ “One quarter of Canadians say they’ll watch Sunday’s Grey Cup as popularity for CFL edges NFL approval.” Angus Reid Institute. November 28, 2014. <http://angusreid.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CFL-Grey-Cup-2014.pdf>

¹⁷ “Viewer Figures,” *Globe and Mail*, November 28, 2013, B4.

technologies such as the press, the railway, and television. The CFL had historically been imagined in terms of regional rivalries with teams traversing the country, filling up the Canadian imagined space with Canadian content. It was a type of content that compensated for the deficiencies of technological nationalism.

Another important factor was that the championship game, the Grey Cup, had become an annual communal ritual. The idea of a trophy that had been awarded since the start of the century, and competed for by teams across the country, some of which were as old as Canada, created a rich tradition. The Grey Cup game had evolved into a true national celebration for fans and non-fans alike, linking Canadians together in a communal ritual. This provided a powerful reason to save the league. The championship game evolved to become an important date on the annual calendar when Canadians were reminded to think nationally instead of continentally. The historical myths surrounding football proved very valuable to the government in maintaining public support for intervention.

There were other factors that further reinforced the association of football and nation. The CFL employed a Canadian content quota, used local players, and was the lone professional sport with only Canadian teams. In addition, the majority of the teams were community-owned, not-for-profit entities. These facts strengthened the league's association with the nation at a time when professional hockey seemingly had slipped away from Canadians. CFL teams, in particular those that were community-owned, had over time become closely linked to the cities they represented and therefore had become repositories of immense pride and identity for fans. Citizens identified with the players who lived and worked in the community, especially the Canadian players. In

Andersonian terms, Canadian football could cultivate feelings of belonging to the nation by helping Canadians imagine themselves as a community even though most of them would never know or meet each other.

After the Second World War, when the profitability of professional sport exploded, the CFL maintained this community-based, non-profit character. The meteoric rise of salaries in professional sport compromises the relationship between sport and identity.¹⁸ Reflecting on a point made earlier, the political economy of Canadian professional football may have helped endear the sport to Canadians. Football in Canada was more closely linked to Canadians as close to a majority of the players were Canadians who earned a similar salary as the fan and played football while holding down another job.¹⁹ While the CFL was still a business, the lower salaries, community-owned teams, and lack of billionaire owners making large amounts of money allowed fans of the CFL to more easily identify with the players.²⁰ The CFL players were seen by many fans as more authentic members and representatives of their communities. As Karen Hall notes, as fans

¹⁸ Smith and Porter question how a sport can represent a nation when a player makes more in a week than a supporter does in a year. See Smith and Porter, *Sport and National Identity*, 6. Brunt raises the same question. See Brunt, "The Changing Face," 82-3.

¹⁹ In 2013 when it was announced that CFL Most Outstanding Player Jon Cornish had been named the Lou Marsh award winner as the Canadian athlete of the year, he was interviewed about the award while working at his job as a bank teller. See Rachel Brady, "Stampeders' Cornish takes Lou Marsh Trophy," *Globe and Mail*, December 10, 2013, S3. The 2013 Grey Cup MVP Kory Sheets worked as a truck driver's assistant. See "Who Earns What," *Maclean's*, September 29, 2014, 27.

²⁰ At a 2012 CFL playoff game in Vancouver, two members of the Vancouver Canuck hockey team were in attendance. The two hockey players earned almost one-and-a-half times more money in a year than all the players on the two football teams combined. See TSN staff, "Canucks re-sign Sedins to Five-year Contracts," July 1, 2009. Tsn.ca/nhl/story. The highest paid player in the NFL makes more money annually than all the players in the CFL combined. The CFL salary cap for 2015 was \$5.05 million per team or \$45.5 million CAN for the league. According to *Forbes* the highest paid player in the NFL in 2015 was Ben Roethlisberger earning \$46.4 million US excluding endorsements and including bonuses. See Kurt Badenhausen, "The NFL's Highest Paid Players 2015," *Forbes.ca*, Sept 14, 2015.

become alienated from wealthy players who fail to identify with the community, the game becomes just a game, lacking loyalty, identity and the “necessary illusion of connection.”²¹ This emphasis on community provided greater public support for government intervention.

Postwar medium-term factors in Canadian society also contributed to government intervention into Canadian football. During the Second World War the Canadian state grew in size and interventionist disposition as it directed the country’s war effort. This disposition remained after the war as the government turned its attention to reconstruction. During the 1960s the federal government became even more active, introducing social programs that made Canada a welfare state. Then the government went further, introducing policies designed to protect Canadian culture and promote national identity and unity. The government had begun to recognize popular culture as a powerful national bonding agent and intervened in the area of sport. Canadian football was viewed as an influential form of popular culture, recognized for the contributions the game could make to Canadian identity and unity. The protection of football was consistent with the approach the government had taken in other areas of culture.

The second medium-term factor was the rise of Canadian nationalism. Centennial celebrations and Expo ‘67 fed its growth, and it continued to swell through the late 1960s and into the 1970s. The rise in English-Canadian nationalism was accompanied by an increase in Quebec nationalism and concerns about national unity. Government intervention into professional football was seen as one of the ways to unite French and

²¹ Hall, *Game Plan*, 308.

English at a time when this was becoming more difficult. Pressure on the government to intervene in the national interest intensified. In this nationalistic climate, the CFL was worth saving because it represented the nation. The government responded by becoming a nationalist actor.

Long-existing fears of American economic and cultural imperialism motivated the government to act. A nationalist intelligentsia warned Canadians about cultural dependence. Fears of Americanization extended to the area of Canadian sport. The greater the impact of forces such as Americanization on communities, the more important indigenous symbols and traditions become to counter these forces. The important role that Canadian football could play in differentiating Canada from the United States was crucial.²² The game was a direct expression of national identity that not only promoted pride and patriotism but also resisted Americanization. Concern about Americanization was one of the primary reasons for these three instances of government intervention into Canadian Football.

There were also short-term factors that prompted interventions in each of the three specific cases. In 1962, professional sport had become a powerful form of popular culture. As a result, Canadian football had grown to be an important part of the Canadian entertainment industry. Television had transformed leisure time in Canada with the potential to inform Canadians of national events while also allowing unprecedented access to foreign culture. Through the medium of television, football became an increasingly more popular spectacle and ritual.

²² Harrison, "The Case for Public," 7.

CTV's purchase of the broadcast rights to the Grey Cup meant that millions of Canadian would not have the opportunity to watch the 1962 game on television. The issue was raised in the House of Commons numerous times. Members of the House instructed the national public broadcaster to show the game as it was in the national interest. By this time football had a century of history in Canada, so the state acted. For the next quarter century, both the CBC and CTV worked together to broadcast the Grey Cup game, underlining its role as a national cultural event. This was the first example of Canadian football being used by the government to promote the national interest.

The second intervention in 1972 was also influenced by several short-term factors. Individuals played a key role in federal government intervention. Jake Gaudaur was a passionate pursuer of government support to protect his football league. John Munro was a football fan from Gaudaur's hometown and the key politician who initially supported the Canadian league. Even when he was removed from the Sport portfolio he continued to advise the league in seeking government support. Prime Minister Trudeau himself knew that sport could be used to unite the country and attended multiple Grey Cup games to support the game and the league. There is always a temptation to attribute too much to individual agency. However, the involvement of these three individuals seemed to be an important catalyst for government involvement.

At this time the separatist movement in Quebec was gaining support and presenting a grave threat to national unity. The CFL faced competition from American professional football, televised on the CBC, and an American professional baseball team in Montreal. Gaudaur furiously lobbied government officials to help save the fragile league. As a

result, John Munro articulated a policy designed to prevent Canadian expansion into the US and American expansion into Canada.

Short-term factors also precipitated the final intervention in 1974. Concern about the Americanization of the Canadian economy remained, and the Liberal government worked to subdue those fears. The Liberals' slim minority government meant that they were dependent on NDP support for power. The nationalistic leaning of the NDP may have influenced the government to protect the CFL. The formation of a new American professional football league served as the catalyst for Bill C-22. The federal government introduced the most aggressive example of football protectionism during a time of great economic and social turmoil.

Bill C-22 demonstrated that nationalism and national cultural institutions were prioritized over the potential gains of closer integration with Canada's southern neighbour. The debate it provoked demonstrated the ambiguities felt by many Canadians who, on the one hand, wanted to consume American (often viewed as superior, world-class) culture and, on the other hand, demanded protection for Canadian cultural institutions. This tension is related to the inferiority complex that is associated with Canada's colonial history. On many occasions, Marc Lalonde referred to the inferiority complex when he spoke of the Football Bill. Canada's neighbor isn't just larger, it's a superpower with greater wealth, power, and confidence than any nation on earth. The common preference for things foreign over local certainly includes the way some Canadians view sport. The media in Canada play a role in cultivating this dependency by producing so much US coverage that American culture seems normal in Canada and Canadian culture abnormal. Some football fans believe that because of the larger field,

the Canadian game is faster, more open and more entertaining. Statistically, the Canadian game produces more scoring, closer games, and longer offensive gains. However, American football is perceived as major league, and Canadian football as minor league and entertainment becomes irrelevant. Canadian football is marginalized as an inferior cultural practice.²³

On three occasions between 1962 and 1974, peak nationalism, an interventionist government, challenges to national unity and identity, and growing concerns about American culture combined to compel the government to intervene to protect a popular sport that over the previous century had come to be closely associated with the Canadian nation. Although the close association of the CFL with Canada continues to this day, the short-term factors that produced these unique government interventions on behalf of professional sport in Canada seem unlikely to be repeated under current conditions.

²³ Hayes, *Blue Jay Fever*, 171-176.

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