

JEAN-PIERRE GABOURY. — *Le Nationalisme de Lionel Groulx*, Ottawa, Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1970, vii-226, \$3.75.

As French Canadian nationalism intensifies and fragments the need for closer analysis of separate groups, movements and leaders become increasingly apparent. Despite all of the contrary evidence, there is still a strong tendency, even among scholars, to refer to French Canadian nationalism as though it were monolithic and unchanging in character. It has, of course, been a developing phenomenon with a varying content even if its goal, the survival of the French Canadian nation, has been constant. A Papineau could express his nationalism in the rhetoric of nineteenth-century liberalism, a Lafliche in the phrases of ultramontane conservatism, and contemporary nationalists have adapted socialist exhortation and analysis to their nationalist ideology. Much of the fascination in the study of French Canadian intellectual history lies in the effort to assess the relative weight of the various component factors in any given expression of nationalism.

Few figures in the history of French Canada present a greater challenge to this type of analysis than Chanoine Lionel Groulx. He is a nationalist who was a cleric, historian, teacher, pamphleteer and journalist all combined into a single and intellectually powerful career. Here, too, is a career which stretches over six decades of Canadian history, decades which included two world wars, a debilitating economic depression, ever-intensifying industrial and urban growth, secularization, a "quiet revolution," and the birth of a serious, well-established movement for Quebec independence. No man, who practised so many vocations and avocations as Chanoine Groulx and who lived through such a rapidly shifting collage of events, could be expected to have developed an entirely satisfactory and internally consistent doctrine. Of course he never waived in his total commitment to the survival and growth of a French Canadian nation. That made him a nationalist, but to say so reveals very little about the content of his philosophy.

In turning to an assessment of that content the ground is heavily combed with traps, or at least problems. Most obviously there is the difficulty of judging the value of differing types of material. Do we find the real Groulx in his carefully-documented historical writing, or in his often polemical magazine articles or speeches? Taking even his historical writings alone: Is *Notre Maître, le Passé*, where historical analysis and contemporary concern run together, or the *Histoire du Canada français*, where a more "objective" approach is evident, the more trustworthy expression of the author's essential views? And what about the exceedingly revealing material, such as *L'Appel de la Race*, published under various pseudonyms? Then, too, there is the

issue of changing circumstances and thus the question of the point at which Groulx's views on a given subject should be considered settled? What was Groulx's basic attitude to Confederation — the one expressed in 1917, or 1921, or 1927 or at some other date?

Jean-Pierre Gaboury, whose book *Le Nationalisme de Lionel Groulx* is a useful contribution to the history of French Canadian ideas, is aware of these complex problems. He does not, unfortunately, resolve all of them and his method of analysis perhaps makes that resolution impossible. His approach is that of the political theorist. He begins with a commendable effort to define the undefinable: "nation et nationalisme." His discussion is excellent and will be found valuable even by those who have reservations about other sections of the book. Combining the conclusions of two excellent analysts of nationalism, Frederick Hertz and Raoul Girardet, he argues that nationalist doctrine is based on four pillars: "l'unité, la souveraineté, la spécificité et le messianisme."

With the ground thus prepared, Gaboury proceeds through Groulx's works by way of a series of sub-categories: "La nation canadienne-française," "le nationalisme," "l'humanisme," "l'histoire," "le politique," and "l'économique." In each of these categories he sets out an array of evidence to elucidate Groulx's position, and indicates how nationalism provided the over-arching doctrine into which everything else was fitted. While this approach is revealing, and adds precision to many aspects of Groulx's thought, it leaves me somewhat unsatisfied. In the first place, it makes Groulx a more tidy thinker than he was in reality. Or, to put it another way, it makes Groulx's thought static. Instead of seeing much of Groulx's writing as a response to particular events, it transforms him into something of an ivory tower philosopher. It is, of course, true that there were certain very basic assumptions in Groulx's intellectual make-up, the first being his fundamental commitment to *la survie de la nation canadienne-française*. Secondly, there was his commitment to Catholicism. From these two assumptions flowed a whole series of guidelines about the nature of the "good society" — good, that is for French Canadian Roman Catholics. But they were guidelines rather than principles, so that Groulx's view of economic question, politics, confederation and even history varied, within limits, according to changing circumstances. It is this dynamic, or sense of evolution, that is lacking in Gaboury's approach. With his settled categories the author presents his evidence almost randomly, without much reference to the circumstances in which a particular passage was written.

While this is a serious criticism, it is not meant to condemn the book. The study provides much new information about Groulx and does so systematically. He has even provided some new biographical information. Early in

his career, Groulx apparently wanted to attend Oxford. Lionel Groulx as a Rhodes scholar! More important is the material drawn from unpublished sources and interviews. For example, a self-definition near the end of his life: "Donc, j'ai conçu mon métier une mission issue du peuple, une mission cherchant à apaiser le désir du peuple à connaître son histoire." So, too, there is a systematic and documented consideration of Groulx's use of the word "race" and a very revealing section on the "Jewish Question." Gaboury also adds some new evidence of Groulx's admiration for the approach to "éducation nationale" as practised by Mussolini and Hitler. No wonder his comments on the composition of the Parent Commission and that Commission's views on the teaching of history were so biting.

Professor Gaboury leaves some questions unanswered, or only partially answered. For example, some further consideration of Groulx's relationship to the French right, and especially *L'Action française*, would have been useful. It might, for example, have explained Groulx's attitude to the historian Fustel de Coulanges, whom he claimed to admire, yet almost totally misunderstood. In her book, *The Historical Thought of Fustel de Coulanges*, Jane Herrick shows how *L'Action française* used de Coulanges for its own purposes and Groulx seems to have taken his views second hand.

Nor does Gaboury deal adequately with Groulx's concept of "le chef" and, I think, underestimates the importance of this concept. He neither fully comprehends the religious dimension of the concept, nor its relation to Jules-Paul Tardivel's view of "le chef" in *Pour la Patrie*, nor provide a satisfactory definition of the concept. As Gaboury notes, Groulx seemed to see some of the required characteristics in a Dollfuss, a Salazar, a Mercier and even temporarily in a Duplessis. Then there was Dollard and, here, Gaboury seems to me to slide over the important essay *Si Dollard Revenait...* too quickly. More important, however, he seems completely unaware of an essay in which Groulx provided a fairly full description of "un chef." In an essay entitled "Un Chef de Trente-Trois Ans," Groulx wrote: "Le chef ou le grand homme se révèle dans l'histoire à deux qualités maîtresses: l'esprit intuitif, le vouloir de grand volontaire. Au sens le plus philosophique du mot, le chef est une personnalité, un être *sui juris*, c'est-à-dire un esprit à soi, une volonté à soi. Intuitif, ou quasi intuitif, il voit plus vite et plus à fond que les autres les déficits, les misères de son milieu et de son temps; et il voit aussi, d'une vision obsédante, l'action qui s'impose." And what is nearly as interesting as the definition is the name of "le chef" to whom Groulx was referring. It was L.-H. LaFontaine, whom today's nationalists denounce as a collaborator.

Groulx's conception of political leadership was deeply undemocratic and almost totally unrealistic. But his writings strengthened that tradition in

French Canadian nationalism that distrusts "mere politicians" and a view of politics, in Kedourie's words, as "a method of realizing this superhuman vision, of assuaging this metaphysical thirst. Such a politics is not concerned with reality." Perhaps the ultimate indication of the unreality of Groulx's political teaching was that it resulted in some of his disciples suggesting that he become "le chef," and enter active politics. He, of course, refused, perhaps realizing that a man could only be "un chef" by staying out of politics.

Gaboury's final assessment of Groulx is highly critical. He judges Groulx's nationalism narrow, reactionary, and out-of-tune with reality. He concludes that Groulx remained a man of the seventeenth century who, in rejecting the enlightenment, could not understand the modern world. A harsh judgement and one, perhaps, that would be somewhat tempered if more of the historical context had been examined. For in the last analysis, Groulx was less a thinker than a frustrated man of action. And that is what makes the context so important. "Ainsi," Gaboury writes, "apparaît-il la victime tragique des conditions mêmes qu'il a si énergiquement combattues." But is this conclusion not begging the real question? If the "conditions" had been more fully explored, it is just possible that Groulx might have appeared less of a victim of "conditions" than a victim of his own ideology. Gaboury seems almost to have accepted Groulx's own assessment of the "conditions," and thus finds himself trapped in Groulx's system..

Gaboury views nationalism as an "épiphénomène" attributable to "conjonctures existentielles funestes." He provides very little evidence for this view, though it is certainly a defensible one. But the relationship is never simple and it is surely possible to argue that the "épiphénomène" itself is a factor contributing to a society's malaise. Another approach to Canon Groulx's career, one which set him in the context and attempted an assessment both of his influence and the degree to which he merely articulated the nationalist commonplaces of his age, might help to resolve this fundamental question. In the meantime everyone interested in the intellectual history of French Canada is indebted to Gaboury for his stimulating and informative contribution to a subject of primary significance.

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JOSEPH LEVITT. — *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf, The Social Program of the Nationalists of Quebec, 1900-1914*, Ottawa, Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1969, 178 p.