K. McRae, “The Structure of Canadian History,” in L. Hartz, ed., *The Founding of New Societies* (New York, 1964)

**Overview**

Canada offers an example of a two-fragment society – one in which there was significant divergence between the two groups. English Canada was characterized by liberalism, while French Canada was characterized by theoretical absolutism, and was highly controlled by its mother country.

**Background**

* Canada offers almost a classic example of a two-fragment society: the French fragment, and the English fragment
* Balance between the two cultures have been stable for the past century
* Ds
* French colonial experience:
  + The effects of absolutism were felt in every branch of public policy
  + In its laws and institutions, the colony of New France reflected the prevailing ethos of authoritarianism to an even greater degree that did the more complex and less malleable society of old France
  + If it is basically true, as has been argued of English colonies, that “America was settled by men who fled from the feudal and clerical oppressions of the Old World,” such a generalization can not hold true for French Canada
  + The first and most fundamental difference between the English and French traditions is that the early English colonies were liberal, heterodox offshoots of a society already deeply divided within itself, while French Canada was the closely controlled projection of a highly centralized regime
    - Though both societies might have believed that colonies should exist for the benefit of the mother country, there was room for considerable divergence as to the latitude permitted to the colonists
  + In the framework of absolutism, New France was to represent the quintessence of the virtues of the parent society; its vices were to be filtered out in the process of fragmentation
  + English Canada – had strong linkages to the American liberal
    - While loyalism (to Britain) is a differentiating quality that distinguished the Canadian fragment from its American origins, for many historians it has obscured the all-important parental relationship between them

**Conclusions**

* The English fragment seems firmly and irremovably anchored to its liberal heritage, though the Canadian experience has shown none of the American tendencies towards “liberal absolutism”
* More difficult to say what the future holds for French fragment – French Canada found its original ethos of unity and centralized control strongly reinforced after Cession by the need to combat the Anglicizing and assimilative pressures all around it. Though climate in Quebec is changing --- move towards the Quiet Revolution
  + Some believe French Canada is now entering its long-delayed liberal revolution, while others – including some French-Cdn intellectuals – feel their society has been betrayed by liberal capitalism that long excluded French Cdns from their prime regards – and this may evolve into to some form of post-liberal socialism