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Université de Montréal

**From Acculturation to Integration.**

The Political Participation of Montréal's Italian-Canadian  
Community in an Urban Context (1945-1990).

par

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Ce mémoire intitulé :

From Acculturation to Integration.  
The Political Participation of Montréal's Italian-Canadian  
Community in an Urban Context (1945-1990).

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## Résumé

Ce mémoire examine la participation politique de la communauté italo-canadienne de Montréal dans un contexte urbain, entre 1945 et 1990. Il s'intéresse plus particulièrement à la contribution des Italo-Canadiens à la politique municipale, au mouvement ouvrier québécois, à la mobilisation autour du débat linguistique et au mouvement féministe. Notre enquête s'appuie principalement sur des documents et journaux publiés par les organisations communautaires italo-canadiennes, notamment le journal montréalais italoophone, *Il Cittadino Canadese*.

Le premier chapitre du mémoire éclaire le rôle joué par les élites immigrantes italiennes dans la construction d'une identité italo-canadienne politisée, ainsi que dans l'établissement de nombreuses institutions communautaires à Montréal. Dans la foulée, plusieurs hommes politiques de descendance italienne sont élus au niveau municipal. S'intéressant à la période 1960-1977, le second chapitre examine la contribution des Italo-Canadiens au mouvement ouvrier québécois et au débat linguistique. À l'origine de l'unification des institutions communautaires, le conflit linguistique a contribué à solidifier l'identité italo-canadienne. De manière paradoxale, du moins en apparence, il a aussi favorisé l'expression de dissensions internes et conduit au développement d'une hétérogénéité politique au sein de la communauté. Le sujet du chapitre 3, le féminisme italo-canadien illustre une autre forme de schisme politique qui se produit à l'occasion de la formation du *Centro Donne Italiane* en 1978, par un groupe de jeunes étudiantes. Se dissociant des institutions communautaires traditionnelles, les féministes italo-canadiennes organisent alors leur propre communauté politisée.

Bien qu'issue du débat linguistique des années 1960 et 1970, l'hétérogénéité politique déjà présente parmi les immigrants italiens n'a fait que s'accroître avec le temps. Une fois leurs besoins essentiels satisfaits et après avoir atteint un niveau raisonnable d'intégration, les Italo-Canadiens ont pu se permettre de prendre leurs distances, littéralement et symboliquement, vis-à-vis des leaders communautaires traditionnellement établis.

**Mots-clés:** Italo-Canadiens, Montréal, immigrants, participation politique

## Abstract

This thesis explores the political participation of the Montreal Italian-Canadian community in an urban context, from 1945-1990. Concentrating on the local level, it examines the Italian-Canadian contribution to municipal politics, the Quebec labour movement, mobilization with regards to the language debate, and feminist activism. This historical account relies mainly upon the Montreal-based, Italian-language newspaper, *Il Cittadino Canadese*, as well as papers published by Italian-Canadian community organizations.

The first chapter examines the role Italian immigrant elites played in the construction of a politicized Italian-Canadian identity, as well as the establishment of numerous community institutions in the city. As a result of their efforts, several politicians of Italian descent were elected to municipal government. Addressing the 1960 to 1977 years, the second chapter investigates the Italian-Canadian contribution to Quebec's labour movement and language debate. Provoking the unification of the collectivity's institutions, the linguistic conflict solidified the Italian-Canadian identity, while it, also, paradoxically, led to internal dissent and political heterogeneity amongst community members. The focus of Chapter 3, Italian-Canadian feminist activism illustrates another form of political schism, when a group of young students came together in 1978 to found the *Centro Donne Italiane*. Disassociated from the collectivity's mainstream institutions, Italian feminists formed their own community, equally as politicized.

As this thesis concludes, though originating with the language debate of the 1960s and 1970s, the political heterogeneity present amongst Italian immigrants only heightened with time. With their basic needs met and a reasonable level of integration attained, Italian-Canadians, could afford, both literally and figuratively, to distance themselves from the established community leadership.

**Keywords:** Italian-Canadians, Montreal, immigrants, political participation

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## Introduction

### Italian-Canadian Adjustment, Acculturation, and Integration in an Urban Political Context

Today Italians-Canadians are one of only two minority ethnic groups over-represented in Canadian politics.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the reasons for the other groups' under-representation are complex and range from discrimination, to economic barriers to overall disinterest. And yet, considering the many other long-standing ethnic groups across the country, the Italian case seems to be a particularity. Both a blessing and a curse, most Canadians are acquainted with politicians of Italian descent. In Quebec, where Italian-Canadians remain, to this day, the largest minority, in terms of ethnic origin<sup>2</sup>, the image exuded by these ethnic politicians is well-embedded in the minds of the province's voters. Represented at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government<sup>3</sup>, the Montreal Italian community has undoubtedly been politically "conspicuous".<sup>4</sup> This visibility, however, is accompanied by certain stereotypes concerning the apparent homogenous political behaviour on the part of the Italian collectivity. Although these generalizations are not completely unfounded, a central concern of this thesis is to deepen analyses in this regard, and will, therefore, attempt to underscore the heterogeneity present amongst politically active Montreal Italian-Canadians in the post-World War II period. Concentrating uniquely on the local level, I will examine the Italian-Canadian contribution to municipal politics, the Quebec labour movement, mobilization with regards to the language debate, and feminist activism.

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<sup>1</sup> The other over-represented group is Jewish. Carolle Simard, "Les territoires de l'ethnicité" in Xavier Leloup and Martha Radice, eds., *Les nouveaux territoires de l'ethnicité* (Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 2008), 115.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 2001 census, approximately 250 000 people claimed Italian as their ethnic origin in Quebec, the overwhelming majority living in Montreal, fourth only to those claiming Canadian, French, or Irish origin.

<sup>3</sup> Micheline Labelle and Joseph Lévy, *Ethnicité et enjeux sociaux: le Québec vu par les leaders de groupes ethnoculturels* (Montréal: Liber, 1995), 296.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Jedwab and Michael Rosenburg, "Institutional Completeness, Ethnic Organizational Style and the Role of the State: The Jewish, Italian, and Greek Communities of Montreal," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 29 (August 1992), 280.



I have chosen to analyze the Italian-Canadian participation in the local politics of Montreal, as a means to shed light on the unique inter-ethnic dynamic of the city. Historians have underlined the importance of the Quebec context when studying Canada's immigrants.<sup>5</sup> In particular, they have pointed to Montreal's unique "double majority", as a major factor in determining the nature of the new arrivals' adjustment.<sup>6</sup> Contributing to the city's cosmopolitan image, ethnic minorities have tended to safeguard their ethnic and linguistic characteristics longer than their counterparts in other provinces.<sup>7</sup> In spite of relatively low levels of immigration, especially in comparison to Toronto and Vancouver, Quebec's metropolis appears, to some observers, as exceptionally diverse, precisely due to the presence of three distinct forces—Francophone, Anglophone, and Allophone.<sup>8</sup> Reflecting the place of immigrants in Quebec historiography, however, Italian-Canadians have attracted considerable attention from sociologists and linguists, but have not been the subject of significant historical research. Moreover, many historical accounts tend to mention Italian immigrants exclusively as they relate to one of the most contentious chapters in the province's history, the Saint-Léonard School Crisis of the late 1960s.<sup>9</sup> This thesis will, thus, strive to move away from the events surrounding the language debate. Yet, as readers will come to understand, in the French-speaking province nearly all aspects of political life have been greatly influenced by nationalistic debates.

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<sup>5</sup> Roberto Perin, "Clio as Ethnic: The Third Force in Canadian Historiography," *Canadian Historical Review* 64 (Summer 1983), 447; Paul-André Linteau, "Les minorités ethnoculturelles dans l'historiographie québécoise" in Beatrice Bagola, ed., *Le Québec et ses minorités* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 146.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Anctil, "Double majorité et multiplicité et ethnoculturelle à Montréal," *Recherches sociographiques* 25 (September-December 1984), 441-456.

<sup>7</sup> V.M.P Da Rosa and R. Poulin, "Espaces ethniques et questions linguistiques au Québec: A propos des communautés italienne et portugaise," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 18, no.2 (1986), 144-148; Claire McNicoll, *Montréal: Une société multiculturelle* (Paris: Editions Berlin, 1993), 273.

<sup>8</sup> Anctil, "Double majorité....," 441.

<sup>9</sup> Linteau, "Les minorités ethnoculturelles....," 156.

## I. Historiography

### A. A "Distinct" Community

Encouraged by the newly adopted Immigration Act of 1952, favouring family unification, and Canada's booming economy, Italians immigrated by the thousands. In total, more than six hundred and fifty thousand came to Canada over the period of a century, yet almost seventy percent immigrated after the Second World War. Quebec alone received approximately one quarter of Italians immigrants, making Italians and their descendants the most important ethnic group in Montreal, after the English and French.<sup>10</sup> Because of its numerical strength, there has been considerable debate over the unity or even, the very existence, of Montreal's Italian community. Considered the primary identifier amongst Italians, immigrants have been sharply divided depending on their region of origin. Many Italian-Canadian associations, for instance, have been regional or village-based.<sup>11</sup> In spite of this heterogeneity, numerous ties have bound together people of Italian origin living in Montreal "into a unity that is not a sociological abstraction." Their sense of community has derived from a "commitment to family, neighborhood and friendship groups, interaction through economic activity, as well as the common culture and experience shared by persons of Italian descent."<sup>12</sup> Finally, Italian immigrants have endured similar difficulties in adapting to Canadian life, where, in spite of their internal diversity, they have frequently been perceived as one and the same by external, and, often prejudiced, observers.

In the postwar period, Quebec's metropolis was constructed around two geographically and institutionally distinct societies.<sup>13</sup> Following suit, Italian immigrants clustered in certain neighbourhoods, creating a vibrant, though segregated, immigrant culture. These ethnic enclaves served defensive purposes, protecting new arrivals from the hostility of their adopted country. They were also, however, a reflection of

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<sup>10</sup> Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin, "Italianité, conflit linguistique et structure de pouvoir dans la communauté italo-québécoise," *Sociologie et Sociétés* 24, no.2 (1983), 90.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec* (Hull: Editions Asticou, 1988), 125.

<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Boissevain, *The Italians of Montreal: Social Adjustment in a Plural Society* (Ottawa: Studies of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1970), 9.

<sup>13</sup> Claire McNicoll, *Montréal : Une société multiculturelle...*, 157.

settlement and immigrant patterns, namely the chain migration phenomenon between Italian villages and Canadian cities.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the ethnically-concentrated neighbourhoods assisted Italians in integrating into the receiving society.<sup>15</sup> Whereas Italianness was a liability during the war, now it was an asset. The influx of immigrants led small shopkeepers, for example, to double and triple their clientele, due to an increased demand for Italian products and service in the Italian language.<sup>16</sup> Although providing financial aid, employment possibilities, and moral support, Little Italy, unfortunately, contributed to the marginalization of the community.<sup>17</sup> Integrated into neither French nor English-Canadian society, Italian-Canadians were economically, politically and socially vulnerable. Exacerbated during the 1960s with the rise of the linguistic and national questions, Italians, due to their numerical strength and choice of English as the language of instruction for their children, were at the forefront of the Saint-Léonard School Crisis.

Though dominating the study of Montreal Italians, historical accounts concerning the linguistic debate provide valuable insights into many aspects of community life and the early years of Italian-Canadian adjustment to Quebec society, since the Italian community of Montreal came of age during a time of significant change in Quebec.<sup>18</sup> As Donat Taddeo and Raymond Taras outline in their book, *Le Débat linguistique au Québec*, three principal reasons explain why this particular conflict, not the first of this nature, became a turning point in Quebec politics. In the first place, francophone nationalists tried to apply a local decision province wide, as indicated by their slogan, “il faut créer dix, vingt, cinquante Saint-Léonard.”<sup>19</sup> Secondly, encouraged by the increasing role of the State, considered the “prime instrument of progress” during the

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<sup>14</sup> John Zucchi, *Une histoire des enclaves ethniques du Canada* (Ottawa: Société Historique du Canada, 2007, Coll. “Les groupes ethniques du Canada,” Brochure no.31), 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Boissevain, *The Italians of Montreal...*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Painchaud, Claude et Richard Poulin. *Les Italiens au Québec* (Hull: Editions Asticou, 1988), 82.

<sup>18</sup> Perin, “Clio as Ethnic...,” 467.

<sup>19</sup> Donat Taddeo and Raymond Taras. *Le débat linguistique au Québec*. Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1987, 94; J. Parisella, *Pressure Group Politics: Case Study of the St. Leonard Schools Crisis* (MA: McGill University, 1971), 57.

Quiet Revolution, nationalists tried to force the hand of the government in enacting language laws, which provoked strong resistance on the part of the Italian community.<sup>20</sup> Thirdly, as Taddeo and Taras explain, “Les orientations scolaires étaient devenues inséparables de la vague nationaliste qui déferlait sur le Québec.”<sup>21</sup> Reinforcing the dominance of English by means of their educational choices, the Italian immigrant became a symbol and Saint-Léonard, a rallying point.

The Italian-Canadian resistance to mandatory French-language education has often been misinterpreted, even today, as a rejection of francophone society. Jean-Claude Corbeil, in his book *L’embarras des langues: Origine, conception, et évolution des la politique linguistique québécoise*, writes, “À cette occasion, les Québécois ont pris brutalement conscience que les immigrants récents tournaient le dos à la société québécoise de langue française, qu’ils choisissaient massivement de s’intégrer à la minorité anglaise et qu’ils préféraient que leurs enfants apprennent anglais.”<sup>22</sup> The research of several historians, however, proves this opinion, is partially false. Italian-Canadians’ opposition to compulsory French schooling reflected, instead, their belief in English as the language for socio-economic mobility and “by no means meant that Italian Montrealers became assimilated into the British community.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, as Jeremy Boissevain’s extensive field research indicates, Italians had one of highest levels of bilingualism in Quebec and were more likely to live beside, work with, and even marry French-Canadians more often than English-Canadians.<sup>24</sup> For economic purposes only, they saw an English language education as the best option, especially considering the poor quality of English taught in French schools.<sup>25</sup> Based on pragmatism instead of ideology, this belief motivated their mobilization in response to Bill 63, Bill 22, and Bill 101, in addition to significant changes within the community’s organizational structure.

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<sup>20</sup> Parisella, *Pressure Group Politics...*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Taddeo and Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec...*, 95.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Claude Corbeil, *L’embarras des langues: Origine, conception et évolution de la politique linguistique* (Montréal: Québec Amérique, 2007), 189.

<sup>23</sup> Paul-André Linteau, “The Italians in Quebec: Key Participants in Contemporary Linguistic and Political Debates” in Franc Sturino and Roberto Perin, eds., *Arrangiarsi: The Italian Immigrant Experience in Canada* (Montreal: Guernica, 1989), 190.

<sup>24</sup> Taddeo and Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec...*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

Prior to the Saint-Leonard School Crisis, the Montreal Italian community had a plethora of community-based associations, more so than any other ethnic group in Montreal, which reflected its particular diversity and dynamic. In response to language legislation, however, new organizations were formed, such as the *Fédération des associations italiennes du Québec* in 1972 and the *Congresso Nazionale degli Italo-Canadesi* in 1974. Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin address this change in Italian-Canadian leadership in their book, *Les Italiens au Québec*, in their article, *Italianité, conflit linguistique et structure de pouvoir dans la communauté italo-québécoise*, and by Painchaud in his master's thesis, *Processus migratoire, communauté et bourgeoisie italo-québécoise*. Essentially, these works argue the following:

A l'intérieur de la communauté italienne, cette résistance à la francisation a provoqué l'émergence d'un mouvement social sans précédent, accélérant et renforçant la restructuration de la communauté dans son ensemble sous l'hégémonie d'un nouveau leadership étroitement associé à une bourgeoisie italo-québécoise montante.<sup>26</sup>

The “bourgeoisie italo-québécoise”, by both serving and employing other Italian-Canadians, reputed to be “docile and productive” labourers, already exacted considerable economic benefits from the community.<sup>27</sup> By claiming to be its only official representative, Italian-Canadian businessmen were now exerting political control and increasing their prestige, not only amongst other Italians, but also in the eyes of mainstream Canadian authorities.

Evidently, the language debate had both internal and external repercussions on community life, whose effects have sparked considerable debate between historians of the Italian-Canadians. Donat Taddeo and Raymond Taras argue that Italian-Canadians achieved a higher level of integration after, and even as a result of, the linguistic crisis.<sup>28</sup> Supporters of sovereignty, for instance, “began to show more openness toward cultural diversity” after the enactment of language legislation, positively affecting, most definitely, the place of ethnic minorities in Quebec society.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, and in line with

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<sup>26</sup> Painchaud and Poulin, “Italianité, conflit linguistique...,” 97.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>28</sup> Taddeo and Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec...*, 227.

<sup>29</sup> Linteau, “The Italians of Quebec...,” 202.

the perspective that I will adopt throughout my thesis, Paul-André Linteau asserts that “the nationalist challenge resulted in a strengthening of the Italian community identity and of its ‘ghettoization’.”<sup>30</sup> This view is at least partly shared by Victor Da Rosa and Richard Poulin’s *Espaces ethniques et question linguistique au Québec: à propos des communautés italienne et portugaise*, where the authors argue that the linguistic question “a permis l’existence au Québec d’un espace ethnique beaucoup plus large et dense qu’ailleurs au Canada.”<sup>31</sup> Whether or not indicative of poor integration, Italians in Montreal managed to significantly safeguard their “attributs ethniques et linguistiques”, therefore evolving differently than their counterparts in Ontario.<sup>32</sup> As evidenced by the language debate, both the national and linguistic questions, in addition to the Quebec’s unique cultural character, have strongly influenced the history of the society’s ethnic minorities, elements historians of Italian-Canadians have no choice but to take into account when studying the community.<sup>33</sup>

#### *B. Towards a Revised Understanding: the Political Participation of Immigrants*

Not only contributing to Quebec immigration history, this thesis also aspires to fill an important void in the literature concerning the political participation of immigrants, since “much remains to be done in the field.”<sup>34</sup> In the past few decades, academic works have proliferated with regards to the economic and social integration of immigrants into North American and European societies, but very few have been conducted addressing their “political incorporation” beyond naturalization and voting patterns.<sup>35</sup> For many scholars, political participation and integration are considered intrinsically related, and not simply because the acquisition of citizenship is a

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Da Rosa and Poulin. “Espaces ethniques et questions linguistiques au Québec...,” 144.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>33</sup> Linteau. “Les minorités ethnoculturelles dans l’historiographie québécoise...,” 156.

<sup>34</sup> Miriam Lapp, “Ethnic Group Leaders and the Mobilization of Voter Turnout: Evidence from Five Montreal Communities,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 31, no.2 (1999), 17.

<sup>35</sup> Subramanian Karthick Ramakrishnan and Thomas Espenshade, “Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation in the United States,” *International Migration Review* 35 (Autumn, 2001), 870-871.

requirement in order to vote.<sup>36</sup> Political participation is viewed as an important means to securing “economic, social, and political footholds” in an adopted country.<sup>37</sup> Activism also enables newcomers to combat “racial and economic discrimination”, “acquire the skills necessary to defend their rights during times of political vulnerability”<sup>38</sup>, and lobby for a more “equitable distribution of societal resources”.<sup>39</sup> In Quebec, however, questions of ethnicity and politics “do not mix well” and generally arouse passionate academic and public debate, the most recent example being the Bouchard-Taylor Commission.<sup>40</sup> While the opinions of the participants were varied, what appeared to be missing throughout the months of discussion was an historical approach to questions of integration and belonging. Through the lens of political participation on the local level, I hope to shed light on these issues across time, as well as contribute to the growing research with regards to the presence of ethnic minorities, an ever-increasing component of the Canadian population, in this country’s political system.

Previous published accounts concerning the political participation of immigrants will serve as a springboard for my own work. In the first place, as Raymond Breton explains in his article *La communauté ethnique, communauté politique*, ethnic communities are not only social, economic or cultural entities, but should also be understood as “mini-polities.” Though situated in an “ensemble institutionnel plus vaste”, ethnic groups are doted with their own institutions and political life and, similar to broader society, have both internal and external affairs.<sup>41</sup> With regards to their intra-communal role, they often compensate for deficiencies on the part of the receiving society’s government. In the French-speaking province, especially, ethnic institutions

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<sup>36</sup> Alain Pelletier, “Ethnie et politique : La représentation des groupes ethniques et des minorités visibles à la Chambre des communes” in Kathy Megyery, ed., *Minorités visibles, communautés ethnoculturelles et politique canadienne : La question de l’accessibilité*, vol. 7, *Commission royale sur la réforme électorale et le financement des partis* (Toronto et Montréal: Dundurn Press et Wilson and Lafleur, 1991), 10.

<sup>37</sup> Subramanian Karthick Ramakrishnan, *Democracy and Immigrant Politics: Changing Demographics and Political Participation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>39</sup> Simard, “Les territoires de l’ethnicité...,” 111.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>41</sup> Breton, Raymond, “La communauté ethnique, communauté politique,” *Sociologie et sociétés* 15, no.2 (1983), 23.

played an important role in assisting and acculturating immigrants. "Left to their own devices" by French- and English-Canadians, the newcomers of the pre-Quiet Revolution period, instead, "found their own solutions to the problems of integration into Quebec society." Due to its "relative inactivity" in the areas of education, health, and welfare, the Quebec state, thus, "reinforced the role of those private agencies which took responsibility for the integration of immigrants."<sup>42</sup> Montreal's Italian community being no exception, mutual aid and regional associations eventually, however, "provided a social milieu within which persons desiring to become prominent in the community compete with each other for position."<sup>43</sup> Not only did Italian-Canadian institutions claim to speak on behalf of the community, but a number of their members have been elected to the Canadian municipal, provincial, and federal governments.<sup>44</sup> It is this aspect of ethnic politics, the shifting from the internal to the external, which I will concentrate on throughout my thesis.

To those who adhere to the "assimilation thesis", the Italian-Canadian community's long-standing political participation may be surprising. Yet, Jerome Black, in *Immigrant Political Adaptation in Canada: Some Tentative Findings*, maintains that "foreign born have, on average, higher levels of political interest."<sup>45</sup> Emphasizing the help given to immigrants in early political learning, the author attributes his findings to three factors. Firstly, sources of information, or "networks", already exist in Canada in the form of relatives and friends who may "supply political information." Secondly, "institutionally complete" communities may "reduce the complexity of the political environment, making the task of learning somewhat easier." Thirdly, but related to the second factor, ethnic group leaders "have a strong incentive to mobilize new followers into established patterns of partisan support."<sup>46</sup> Contradicting the last point, however, Miriam Lapp's research suggests that "leaders tended to stress the merits of participation

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<sup>42</sup> Jedwab and Rosenburg, "Institutional Completeness, Ethnic Organizational Style and the Role of the State...", 272.

<sup>43</sup> Boissevain, *The Italians of Montreal...*, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Miriam Lapp, *Ethnic Political Participation in Montreal: The Role of Community Leaders* (PhD: Université de Montreal, 1997), 154-155.

<sup>45</sup> Black, Jerome H. "Immigrant Political Adaptation in Canada: Some Tentative Findings." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 15 (March 1982), 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.



for participation's sake, rather than for the possibility of achieving a particular electoral outcome."<sup>47</sup> As Lapp explains, there is a strong emphasis on "civic duty" in ethnic communities, instead of overt partisan support.<sup>48</sup> It was also found that minorities do not blindly support political candidates from the same ethnic background. The politician must possess the right ideology and belong to the right party, in order to receive the vote of an ethnic minority, similar to that any other citizen.<sup>49</sup> And like "majority" politicians, elected representatives from minority communities are not bound by their ethnicity in the political realm. They attempt to serve the entire population, regardless of ethnocultural background.

Further exploring the nature of immigrant political participation, Carolle Simard's study examines the role of ethnic politicians and their relations with their respective communities. Conducting extensive interviews with elected officials at the municipal level, Simard indicates that minority politicians are "réticents à l'idée de devoir se faire les porte-parole de leur communauté origine." Ethnic politicians wish to be considered, first and foremost, members of elected office and not members of a cultural community.<sup>50</sup> In spite of this desire, these politicians project a vision of themselves "plus ou moins marquée par la conscience de différence." This sentiment is reinforced by the electorate as well as the "exclusive" attitude exuded by "majority" colleagues.<sup>51</sup> Since it is more difficult to make a successful bid for office as a minority than a member of the majority,<sup>52</sup> politicians feel they have no choice but to rely on their ethnic counterparts to get elected and work in collaboration with community organizations to do so. They are also aware of the tendency amongst political parties to run ethnic candidates in ethnic ridings to win "ethnic votes."<sup>53</sup> Yet, once elected, as Simard explains, "ils avaient plutôt tendance à s'éloigner des préoccupations de leur

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<sup>47</sup> Black, "Immigrant Political Adaptation...", 26; Lapp, "Ethnic Group Leaders...", 35.

<sup>48</sup> Lapp, *Ethnic Political Participation in Montreal...*, 359.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>50</sup> Carolle Simard, "Les élus issus des groupes ethniques minoritaires à Montréal: Perceptions et représentations politiques, une étude exploratoire," *Politique et Sociétés* 22, no.1, (2003), 65.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

communauté d'origine et à adopter une position médiane à l'égard des problèmes à résoudre, qu'il s'agisse d'enjeux ethniques ou non."<sup>54</sup> As the studies of Breton, Black, Lapp and Simard, therefore, demonstrate, the decisions of politicians and their communities are not dictated strictly by their ethnicity, but there, nevertheless, appears to be discernable patterns, whether on the part of minority politicians, ethnic leaders or community members.

## II. Methodology, Sources and Thesis Outline

Of course, the study of politics is not limited to elections and voter turnout. Political activity can include individual and collective involvement in social movements, citizen's groups, media outlets, or political parties. Social and personal interactions occurring on a daily basis can also be considered political.<sup>55</sup> In light of this broadened definition, this thesis examines the wide spectrum of Italian-Canadian political participation in Montreal, encompassing, as previously mentioned, municipal politics, the Quebec labour movement, mobilization with regards to the language debate, and feminist activism. More specifically, it will be directed by three main research goals. Often the basis for political action, "members of the elite tend to have a greater interest in the maintenance of the community and in the particular definition of its identity."<sup>56</sup> I will, therefore, firstly, examine the role of community elites in the construction the Italian-Canadian collective identity. Secondly, I will explore the role of women in Montreal political life, emphasizing the need for a gendered analysis of Italian-Canadian political participation and politics. Finally, I hope to consider the maturation of the community over a period of approximately four decades. The study of integration, a seemingly indefinable concept, at the very least, "needs a long-term perspective and a historical approach."<sup>57</sup> Inspired by recent theoretical developments in ethnic studies,

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>55</sup> John Ruyters, Marion Austin, Patrick Carter and Terry Murphy, *Canadian and World Politics* (Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publication Limited, 2005), 4-5.

<sup>56</sup> Raymond Breton, *The Governance of Ethnic Communities: Political Structure and Processes in Canada* (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1991), 157.

<sup>57</sup> Gabriela Duce, *The Process of Integration of Immigrants: The Case of Italians in Montreal* (PhD: Université de Montréal, 1977), 37.

women's studies and immigration history, I will rely upon three main conceptual frameworks.

### A. *Identity as a Social Construction*

Most social scientists today understand ethnicity to be a social construction, where “members of a group consciously participate in the process of ethnicization”. Referred to as the “instrumentalist version of ethnicity”, this interpretation acknowledges both internal and external elements to identity formation, since ethnic groups “emerge in response to specific, usually oppressive, social conditions.”<sup>58</sup> It is not previous cultural difference that determines the expression of ethnicity in North America, but instead, “the specificity of power relations at any given historical moment and in a particular place that triggers a strategy of pseudo-historical explanations, camouflaging the ‘inventive’ act itself.”<sup>59</sup> In fact, the concept of “invention”, as determined by spatiotemporal factors, is particularly useful in appreciating the political nature of ethnic identity. Similar to the Andersonian conception of nationhood, ethnic groups are “imagined communities”<sup>60</sup>, where identities are played upon by elites, or community leaders, as part of a “political strategy”. In other words, “l’appartenance ethnique ou nationale fait partie des ressources que des formations politiques utilisent pour conquérir le pouvoir.”<sup>61</sup> In recent decades, most notably, it has become more common for historians to view ethnic collective action as “proactive rather than reactive”, pointing to the applicability of this theory.<sup>62</sup>

### B. *A Feminist Perspective on Politics*

Women have typically been “portrayed as less concerned with politics than men and less able to be political”, due to their under-representation in the formal political

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<sup>58</sup> Jason McDonald, *American Ethnic History: Themes and Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 10.

<sup>59</sup> Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), xvi.

<sup>60</sup> Benedict Anderson, *L’imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l’origine et l’essor du nationalisme* (Paris: Editions la découverte, 1996), 23-58.

<sup>61</sup> Jean-Claude Ruano-Borbalan, *L’identité: L’individu, le groupe, la société* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 12.

<sup>62</sup> McDonald, *American Ethnic History...*, 141.

system.<sup>63</sup> In earlier studies, academics regarded “traditional forms of political behaviour as the norm” were women, quite clearly, did not “conform to expectations”. This “male-focused model” ignored the “long and rich history” of female political participation.<sup>64</sup> However, by adopting a feminist framework of analysis the definition of politics is broadened, bringing to light women’s political activism.<sup>65</sup> “Radical” feminists, for instance, contend that “women do not participate less than men, instead, they participate differently.” In order to incorporate women, the study of politics, they assert, needs to include a “wider range of political arenas and activities”, especially “unstructured associations, voluntary organizations and protest groups”.<sup>66</sup> Since it is primarily women who “build, adapt and change informal networks” in immigrant communities, this is a particularly valid theory, invaluable for my thesis.<sup>67</sup> Immigrant women can now be viewed as political agents within their homes, their communities, as well as in broader society, an approach that allows historians to paint an all-encompassing picture of their political activism.

### C. *An Anti-Racist Approach*

For historians of ethnic minorities, the “anti-racist” approach promoted by Timothy Stanley adequately captures key theories, necessary when considering the lived experiences of immigrants and their place in Canadian historiography. His greatest contribution to the study of immigrants and ethnic minorities in Canada, however, lies in his two-thronged interpretation of the effects of racism. As Stanley writes, “Racism is only discussed as something that affected Jews and people of colour, not as a phenomenon that shaped “whiteness” and Anglo-Europeans’ power and privilege”.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Cris Corrin, *Feminist Perspectives on Politics* (Edinburg: Pearson Education Limited, 1999), x.

<sup>64</sup> Marianne Githens, Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski, eds., *Different Roles, Different Voices: Women and Politics in the United States and Europe* (New York: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1994), x.

<sup>65</sup> Corrin, *Feminist Perspectives on Politics...*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Githens, Norris and Lovenduski, *Different Roles, Different Voices...* p.25.

<sup>67</sup> Dirk Hoerder, “From Migrants to Ethnics: Acculturation in a Societal Framework” in Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch, eds., *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 250.

<sup>68</sup> Timothy Stanley, “Why I Killed Canadian History: Towards an Anti-Racist History in Canada,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 65 (May 2000), 90.

Racism, instead of being understood as a phenomenon only affecting minorities, should instead be interpreted “relationally”, where “someone else’s privilege exists in relation to someone else’s oppression or lack of privilege” an approach which enables historians to underscore the limits of “agency”.<sup>69</sup> In light of Stanley’s assertion, historians can apply the category of ethnicity to all Canadians, regardless of their ethnic background. Though immigrants have not altered the structural composition of Canada, they have, nevertheless, deeply affected many aspects of Canadian society over time, namely the class, gender, and ethnic dynamic in Canadian cities, a reality Stanley’s anti-racist theory emphasizes.

Anti-racism can also be extended to include gender-based analyses, a theoretical framework referred to as “anti-racist feminism”. Though acknowledging the prevalence of patriarchy and racism, anti-racist feminism “seeks to affirm agency” amongst minority women, maintaining that they are also “actors and agents of change”, and not simply victims.<sup>70</sup> Anti-racist feminism, most importantly, “raises questions about how to support ‘difference’ without simply reiterating an objectifying framework.”<sup>71</sup> For instance, Italian immigrant women have been “constructed” as either being “controlled by men or victimized by a deeply patriarchal Latin culture”, stereotypes reflected in the writing of their history.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, a closer examination contains numerous examples of Italian women who were “female resisters, radical exiles, rank-and-file militants and community-based activists.”<sup>73</sup> This discrepancy can be explained by the tendency amongst historians to use Anglo-centric models of interpretation. As Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta specify, the struggles undertaken in the workforce or community sphere, since their arrival in the Americas at the turn of the twentieth-century, were not “battles for autonomous individualism”, like those initiated by Anglo-Saxon women. Instead, for women from Italy, as for many others in the Latin World,

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>70</sup> Angeles Calliste and George Sefa Dei, eds., *Anti-Racist Feminism: Critical Race and Gender Studies* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2000), 15.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>72</sup> Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives: Italian Women Workers of the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), x.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

women's quests for power and influence were "collective ones", where improvements in their lives were "linked to improvements in the lives of their families and entire communities", a model of collective action that, I suspect, carried over to the political sphere.<sup>74</sup>

#### D. *From Acculturation to Integration, Unity to Desunity, Class to Gender*

This thesis is organized both chronologically and thematically to demonstrate how Italian-Canadian activism evolved over time, while focusing on different political fronts, from 1945-1990. Historians studying the Montreal Italian community are privileged by the significant amount of records left behind, dependant upon, of course, their ability to work in English, French and Italian. Attempting to discover the marginalized immigrant "voice", historians have indeed placed great emphasis on documents coming directly from immigrant groups.<sup>75</sup> Ethnic print media, in particular, has proved essential to Diaspora identity and community formation.<sup>76</sup> It also "appeared to play a strong role for immigrants who might otherwise be much slower to respond to Canadian politics."<sup>77</sup> In the early sixties, at least, approximately seventy percent of immigrants in Montreal read ethnic newspapers.<sup>78</sup> Reflective of its diversity, in terms of class, neighborhood, and political orientation, the Italian-Canadian community of Montreal benefits from a plethora of newspapers. Hence, I have decided to extensively analyze one of the most important Italian-language publications in Montreal during the period under study, *Il Cittadino Canadese*. This newspaper, founded in 1941 and published since, is a weekly publication and reports on, normally in this order of importance, Italian-Canadian, Canadian, and Italian affairs. In order to facilitate the reading of this thesis, I have translated all articles from the original Italian to English, while citing in French, for the remaining non-English sources.

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>75</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *The Writing of English Canadian Immigrant History* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1997, Coll. "Canada's Ethnic Group Series," Booklet no.22), 5.

<sup>76</sup> Olga Bailey, Myria Georgiou and Ramaswami Harindranath, eds., *Transnational Lives and the Media: Re-Imagining Diaspora* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 2.

<sup>77</sup> Jerome Black and Christian Leithner, "Immigrants and Political Involvement in Canada: The Role of the Ethnic Media," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 20, no.1 (1988), 15.

<sup>78</sup> Anctil, "Double majorité..." 451.

In addition to *Il Cittadino Canadese*, I have relied upon the documents of various other Italian-Canadian associations, particularly as this thesis progresses. As the Italian community's political participation became fragmented over time, organizations of varying political stripes were founded throughout the years. The *Movimento progressista italo-quebecchese* (M.P.I.Q.), a socialist workers' association established in 1971, issued a monthly newsletter entitled *Il Lavoratore*, while the *Centro Donne Italiane*, a women's centre for Italian immigrant women which came into being in 1978, published monthly newsletters as well, namely *Il Bollettino* and *L'altra faccia della luna*. Significantly, these publications openly critiqued the established community leadership, embodied by major Italian-language newspapers, such as *Il Cittadino Canadese*. I will therefore use the writings of the socialist and feminist groups to underline the difference of opinion present within the Italian community, and its specific class and gender perspective. There are, however, limitations with regards to the use of the above-mentioned sources. It is difficult to determine the significance of the publications' respective circulations and, especially in the case of *Il Cittadino Canadese*, whether or not the average reader read the newspaper from cover to cover, or if he or she used the publication for select information only, and read French- or English-language newspapers for more general news. Many most likely did both.<sup>79</sup> It should also be mentioned that very few people authored the writings of any single Italian-Canadian publication.

In order to understand the community's acculturation to the Canadian political system, this thesis begins in the years immediately following the Second World War. In Chapter 1, I explore the role community elites played in the construction of a politicized Italian-Canadian identity, by means of a qualitative study of *Il Cittadino Canadese*. The newspaper was founded by Antonino Spada, a vehement anti-facist, and, as I will argue, imbued with a political purpose since its inception. Spada's emphasis on civic duty was, as we will see, a determinant factor in the adjustment and acculturation of the post-World War II collectivity. Because Italian political representation was a key component of Spada's vision of Canadianization, *Il Cittadino Canadese's* writers supported the

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<sup>79</sup> In 1985, at least, it was found that 84% of Italian immigrant adults read almost always or occasionally Italian-language newspapers in Montreal. The same could be said in 63% with regards to French-language newspapers, and 40% of English-language newspapers. Bruno Villata, *Bilinguisme et problématique des langues ethniques: enquête sur le comportement linguistique des jeunes Montréalais d'origine italienne* (Québec: Centre international de recherche sur le bilinguisme, 1985), 35.

candidacy of Alfredo Gagliardi, a Montreal-born Italian, during his municipal election campaigns and thus mobilized the community's voters. In addition to encouraging formal political participation, with the arrival of thousands of new immigrants, the newspaper's journalists sought to unify Italian immigrants to improve their social, economic, and political standing. As a result of their efforts, numerous community institutions were built in the city, which inscribed the community in Montreal's urban landscape. A key period in Montreal Italian-Canadian history, the actions undertaken by the Italian-Canadian leadership, as this first chapter will conclude, prepared the community for the upheavals of the Saint-Léonard School Crisis.

Addressing the 1960 to 1977 years, Chapter 2 will investigate the role Italian-Canadians played in the Quiet Revolution. Adjusted to Canadian society, including its political system, community leaders were now more concerned with improving the poor working and living conditions of Italian immigrants, than political representation. Significantly, however, the necessity of formal and informal political activism was increasingly brought to light with the intensification of the labour movement and the linguistic question. Journalists encouraged immigrant workers to join unions and to strike, as well as defend their choice of English-language education for their children. Mobilization in response to the linguistic crisis, however, pitted Italian-Canadians against the province's French-speaking majority. Provoking the unification of the collectivity's institutions, the events of the 1960s and 1970s solidified the Italian-Canadian identity, while it, also, as we will see, led to internal dissent and political heterogeneity amongst community members. Because of these developments, I have identified the language debate as a turning point in Italian-Canadian political participation. Leftist groups, such as the socialist *Movimento progressista italo-quebecchese* critiqued the so-called Italian elite via its newsletter, *Il Lavoratore*. Another dissenting voice, Marco Micone, a young artist, did so publicly, to the great ire of the established leadership. As I will maintain, politically active Italian-Canadians hereby divided, more or less, into two camps, one very "progressive" and the other quite "traditional". This political fragmentation was, nonetheless, not uniform and was continually contested, especially with the rise of the feminist movement.



The focus of Chapter 3, Italian-Canadian feminist activism will illustrate a third form of political schism. While adhering to the “progressive” political tendency, a group of young students came together in 1978 to found the *Centro Donne Italiane*. Though influenced by socialist thought, like the M.P.I.Q., the founders of the Montreal Italian Women’s Centre, nevertheless, underscored the “intersection of class, ethnic, and gender divisions.”<sup>80</sup> The origins of the Montreal Italian Women’s Centre, in fact, point to the role Italian-style patriarchy played in motivating these women to establish their own political practices. Relying upon the organization’s newsletters, *Il Bollettino* and *L'altra faccia della luna*, I will argue that the Women’s Centre effectively reconciled the differences between the “modern” and the “traditional” women of the community, essentially by focusing on empowerment, awareness, and solidarity. Because self-identified feminists were a definite minority, this chapter will indicate the differences between ethnic women, as well as the competing definitions of feminist liberation. For instance, Italian-Canadian women did not necessarily understand wifehood, motherhood, or religion in the same manner. Likewise, Italian immigrant women have viewed these same aspects of womanhood differently from French- or English-Canadian women, and thus would have offered opposing solutions to their oppression. This final chapter, concluding in 1990, should reassert the idea of Italian-Canadian political heterogeneity. Disassociated from the collectivity’s mainstream institutions, Italian feminists formed their own community, equally as politicized.

As members of Montreal’s largest allophone group, the Italian-Canadians occupied a precarious place in post-World War II Quebecois society, defined more and more by the French language, versus the Catholic religion. Arguably more so than any others, they have often been caught in the middle of the two linguistic majorities, as well as their respective, and frequently opposing, understanding of the local and national. This thesis, however, will try not to emphasize conflicts surrounding ethnic relations in Quebec. Instead, I will attempt to underline the lesser known interplay between groups, since cultures, politics, and intellectual ideas are necessarily “forged through an

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<sup>80</sup> Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Contextualizing Feminism: Gender, Ethnic, and Class Divisions,” *Feminist Review* 15 (Winter, 1983), 64.

interaction of internal and external influences.<sup>81</sup> As we will see, Italian immigrants were influenced by broader Quebec and Canadian societies, and they influenced them. Finally, Italian-Canadians present historians with an alternative perspective on Montreal society, one that is neither French nor English-Canadian. At the crossroads of the two Canadas, the histories, identities, and experiences of Italian-Canadians indicates the complexity of the Anglophone/Francophone/Allophone dynamic, mainly in Montreal, but also across Canada. Although my thesis will undoubtedly fall into the domain of ethnic studies, it is, first and foremost, a work in Canadian history, simply told from the perspective of the “third solitude”. Similar to all scholars of Diasporas, I aspire to challenge the “exclusivity on which dominant versions of national identity and collective belonging are based,” thereby contributing to a “multi-centric” interpretation of Canadian history.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Montreal, the Sixties, and the Forging of a Radical Imagination* (PhD: Queen’s University, 2007), 15.

<sup>82</sup> Braziel, Jana Evans, and Anita Mannur, *Theorizing Diaspora* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 5; Stanley, “Why I Killed Canadian History...,” 85.

## Chapter 1

### The Early Years: Asserting the Italian-Canadian Place in the Urban Landscape, the Case of Alfredo Gagliardi, 1945-1960

The post-World War II political participation of Montreal's Italian-Canadian community can trace its origins to the interwar period. Deeply affected by the intellectual and political climate of the times, the collectivity "nearly unanimously" supported Italy's fascist regime. Although surely a number of expatriates agreed ideologically with the Mussolini government, Italian immigrants, generally poor workers, mainly enjoyed the attention paid to them by the totalitarian establishment. Replacing the term "emigrant" with "Italians abroad", Montreal Italians now felt "assisted" and "protected" by their homeland during these years of economic uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> In Quebec, especially, the Consulate was very active in mobilizing the "colony". Quickly gaining the backing of the community elite, the major institutions of the collectivity, notably *La Madonna della Difesa*, an Italian-language Church, diffused *Il Duce's* dogma to the overwhelmingly illiterate masses. However, while Italian priests and *notabili* glorified Italian fascism, there also existed a dissident movement within the community, led by Antonino Spada. Born in Italy, Spada arrived in Canada in 1924. A vehement anti-fascist, he was very involved in the North American campaign against the Italian regime, actively participating in the "Free Italy" movement.<sup>2</sup> Often speaking on behalf of his comrades to the Canadian authorities, Spada professed his allegiance to the Allied cause and denounced his fellow Italians indoctrinated by Mussolini's dogma.<sup>3</sup> After Italy went to war, Spada took his critique a step further by establishing *Il Cittadino Canadese*, an Italian-language publication, in 1941. Influencing the ideological slant of his newspaper, Spada's early political activism and loyalty to Canada, as I will argue, were determinant factors in the adjustment and acculturation of the post-World War II

<sup>1</sup> Filippo Salvatore, *Le fascisme et les Italiens à Montréal* (Montréal: Guernica, 1995), 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> Library and Archives Canada, Antonino Spada Fonds, R2934-0-6-F, Volume 1, "L'attivit  anti-fascista a Montreal," *Ministero del Interno*, Rome, 29 September, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Library and Archives Canada, Antonino Spada Fonds, R2934-0-6-F, Volume 1, "Says Fascists Have Fifth Column Active in Canada," *Ottawa Journal*, 16 December, 1940.

Montreal Italian-Canadian community, especially with regards to its political participation.

As the following chapter will demonstrate, 1945-1960 were the foundation years of the postwar collectivity. A time of economic boom, Italians were welcomed to Canada *en masse* as “bona fide” immigrants.<sup>4</sup> Due to the Immigration Act of 1952, favouring family re-unification, kinship networks were established and Italians, to a certain extent, were able to re-create the warmth that characterized their native villages in Canada.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly, however, an intellectual and entrepreneurial class took over the reigns of community leadership. No longer Italian priests, unlike the early twentieth century, the postwar elites exercised a modernizing influence over the collectivity, disseminated, in part, by *Il Cittadino Canadese*.<sup>6</sup> Remaking the community in its own image, these ambitious leaders sought to construct a politicized Italian-Canadian identity and eventually, asserted the community’s presence in Montreal. As a reflection of their efforts, several politicians of Italian descent were elected to municipal office in 1950, 1954, 1957, and 1960 and numerous community institutions were built in the city, namely the *Ospedale Italiano Santa Cabrini*, founded in 1957. While exerting considerable control over the Italian masses, a role solidified by the end of the 1950s, the economic and intellectual elite, undoubtedly, played a crucial role during the postwar years, when Italianess, as we will see, was no longer a “liability”, but an “asset”.<sup>7</sup> A key period in Montreal Italian-Canadian history, the actions undertaken by the Italian-Canadian leadership, as this chapter will conclude, prepared the community for the upheavals of the Quiet Revolution, especially the St. Leonard School Crisis of 1967.

## I. The Construction of a Politicized Italian-Canadian Identity

In spite of the obvious difficulties faced by all immigrants to Canada, the post-World War II was a time of hopefulness. The war over, much of the suspicion directed

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<sup>4</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 107.

<sup>5</sup> Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin, “Italianité, conflit linguistique et structure de pouvoir dans la communauté italo-québécoise,” *Sociologie et Sociétés* 24, no.2 (1983), 90.

<sup>6</sup> Claire McNicoll, *Montréal: Une société multiculturelle* (Paris: Editions Berlin, 1993), 236.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Boissevain, *The Italians of Montreal: Social Adjustment in a Plural Society* (Ottawa: Studies of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1970), 8.

towards the Italian Diaspora, as a possible “fifth column”, largely disappeared.<sup>8</sup> No longer considered “enemy aliens”, Italian-Canadian intellectuals reveled in the postwar atmosphere.<sup>9</sup> *Il Cittadino Canadese*, diffusing this optimism to the community, printed several articles concerning the Canadian Citizenship Act. Enacted June 27th, 1946 and coming into effect January 1st, 1947, the new law conferred a common citizenship on all Canadians, whether born in Canada or not. In a translated version of a speech given by Liberal Cabinet member Paul Martin, new arrivals are welcomed into the “Canadian family” and encouraged to proclaim with pride, “I am Canadian”, regardless of ethnicity.<sup>10</sup> In addition to a change in attitude on the part of the Canadian government, the Italian-Canadian community was fortified by its ever-increasing numbers. Significantly, the newspaper encouraged long-standing immigrants to embrace their recently landed “brothers”, as cultural and economic reinforcements. The “new immigration”, as Antonino Spada stressed, “is equivalent or superior to the old”. Contrasting their higher education level, in comparison to the prevalence of illiteracy amongst older community members, he ensured his readers that the more recent immigrants would “maintain the good reputation of the Italians in Canada”.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, seen as bringing “new ideas”, “new aspirations”, and “new energies”, the Italian collectivity was rejuvenated by the new arrivals, many young and eager to fully participate in Canadian society.<sup>12</sup> Clearly a time of great change for the community, the post-World War II period can be considered a new chapter in Montreal Italian-Canadian history or, in the words of Spada, a time for “rebirth.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Library and Archives Canada, Antonino Spada Fonds, R2934-0-6-F, Volume 1, “Says Fascists Have Fifth Column Active in Canada,” *Ottawa Journal*, 16 December, 1940.

<sup>9</sup> “Cittadinanza Canadese e l’unita nazionale: risposta dell’On. Anthony Hlynka, al discorso dell’On. Paul Martin, Segretario di Stato,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 May 1946, 3.

<sup>10</sup> “Cittadinanza canadese e l’unita nazionale: discorso dell’On. Martin,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 May 1946, 3.

<sup>11</sup> “Nuovi aspetti e possibilita dell’immigrazione italiana,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 September 1949, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “La nostra grande miseria,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 September 1958, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Antonino Spada, “Del romper lance,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 August 1944, 2.

Contrary to the early twentieth century, post-World War II Italian immigrants to North America came with the “intent to stay”.<sup>14</sup> Reflected in the writings of *Il Cittadino Canadese*, the identity cultivated amongst Italian communities abroad was well-anchored in the Diaspora. With only the essentials of Italian news, much of the newspaper was dedicated to community life in North America. Complete with its own “mythology”<sup>15</sup> a new “imagined community”<sup>16</sup> was created via the Italian-language publication, where, for example, Italian-American “heroes”, such as Fiorello LaGuardia<sup>17</sup>, the beloved former mayor of New York, were glorified.<sup>18</sup> Significantly, Montreal Italian-Canadian elites were also well-aware of the particularities of living in Canada’s francophone province. As they experienced the Canadian duality on a daily basis, unlike their counterparts in Toronto, Antonino Spada and other editorialists conceived Canadian immigration as being divided into two types: “that which comes to Quebec and that which goes to the rest of the country.”<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, instead of encouraging integration into one or the other, Enzo Colla, a regular contributor, proposed that Italians become the “mediators” between French and English-Canadians, two groups often in opposition.<sup>20</sup> Neither French, nor English, Italian-Canadians in fact looked to the Jewish collectivity for inspiration. With its origins dating back to the early twentieth century, the Jewish community had a well-developed institutional network, due, in part, to its status as a religious minority in a province sharply divided along Catholic and Protestant lines. Highly “institutionally complete”, it was the envy of the

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<sup>14</sup> Giuseppe Prezzolini, “Discorso agli emigrati,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 January 1953, 2.

<sup>15</sup> The term mythology was used by the narrator, Arthur Lamothe, in the documentary, *Dimanche D’Amérique*. Dir. Gilles Carles. National Film Board of Canada, 1961. He outlines the development of the Italian-American “nation,” evoking the emphasis placed on and pride created by the success of certain individuals, such as Joe DiMaggio and Fiorello LaGuardia. This concept is also present in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, where La Guardia, especially, was mentioned.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict Anderson, *L’imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l’origine et l’essor du nationalisme* (Paris: Editions la découverte, 1996), 23-58.

<sup>17</sup> Fiorello LaGuardia, the American-born son of an Italian Catholic father and Italian Jewish mother, was the mayor of New York from 1934-1945.

<sup>18</sup> Giuseppe Prezzolini, “Discorso agli emigrati,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 January 1953, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Antonino Spada, “Inglese, francese, italiani o canadese ‘tout court’,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 December 1955, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Enzo Colla, “Al sopra della mischia,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 11 July 1955, 2.

Italian-Canadian intellectual class.<sup>21</sup> Often praising its organizational ability, journalists desired an Italian version of every Jewish institution imaginable, from the Hebrew Free Loan Association to the Jewish General Hospital.<sup>22</sup> A more successful ethnic group, Italians were encouraged to emulate Jews, especially with regards to their perceived group cohesion.<sup>23</sup>

Undoubtedly, an implicit message of unity permeated the writings of *Il Cittadino Canadese*. In an article entitled *Unirsi o perire (Unite or Perish)*, Anselmo Bartolotti maintained that solidarity is the key to solving the problems specific to Italian-Canadians.<sup>24</sup> For example, he referred to an article printed in an Ottawa newspaper in 1944, *Eager to Quit Wops Beg Lone Officer to Capture Them*. If Italians were not fighting “like cats and dogs” amongst themselves, he argued, they would not be “only wops” in the eyes of the Canadian public and authorities. Unity is necessary, he continued, not only for economic or political motives, but also for the children of Italian immigrants, whom “are Canadians and want to be Canadians for real”.<sup>25</sup> In fact, it appeared to be the consensus amongst the community elites, economic and intellectual, that Italian immigrants needed to “assimilate” to the social, economic and political life of Canada. By actively participating, the reasoning went; Italians would improve their status and prestige in Canadian society.<sup>26</sup> The first step to “assimilating”, however, was Italian-Canadian representation in the municipal, provincial, and federal echelons of government. Ensuring the particular needs of immigrants on the Canadian agenda, Italian-Canadians in high-ranking governmental positions would bring to light, as

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<sup>21</sup> Jack Jedwab and Michael Rosenburg, “Institutional Completeness, Ethnic Organizational Style and the Role of the State: The Jewish, Italian and Greek Communities of Montreal”. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 29, no.3 (August 1992), 274.

<sup>22</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “La nostra grande miseria: una soluzione,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 September 1958, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “Come formare il nostro capitale sociale,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 September 1958, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Anselmo Bartolotti, “Unirsi o perire,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 September 1944, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Anselmo Bartolotti, “Per l’unita degl’italo-canadese,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 September 1943, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Enzo Colla, “Per un giudice italiano,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 May 1952, 2; Antonino Spada, “Politicamente: Bianchi, ma stranieri o negri ‘Tout Court’,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 February 1956, 4; Nicola Ciamarra, “Nel passato si era in pochi e si e fatto molto; oggi siamo in tanti, ma disuniti e senza ideali,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 17 April 1959, 3.

Camillo Carli, a journalist, wrote, “our difficulties, our troubles, and our most legitimate aspirations”.<sup>27</sup> Evidently, community elites believed only those of Italian descent, regardless of place of birth, could properly advance the interests of the Italian immigrant electorate, thereby defining community as a product of ethnicity. Significantly, *Il Cittadino Canadese* wanted to be the newspaper of all Italian-Canadian’s, whether born in Italy or not.<sup>28</sup>

Imbued with a strong political purpose, the journalists of *Il Cittadino Canadese* played an integral role in politicizing the collectivity; presumably hoping that informed citizens would lead to the presence of Italian-Canadian politicians in office. Several articles were, in effect, dedicated to the political socialization of immigrants, containing in depth explanations of the Canadian electoral system.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the newspaper’s key function was to inculcate its readership with “a sense of dignity and responsibility”. Emphasizing “civic duty”, Antonino Spada claimed *Il Cittadino Canadese* to be politically independent, only motivated by “defending the interests” of Italian-Canadians, though, of course, a bias in itself.<sup>30</sup> Spada’s anti-fascist colours are also quite obvious when analyzing his editorials. Reminding his readers that the electoral ballot is the “civilian arm” utilized in the “conquest of emancipation and auto-determination”, Spada demanded that naturalized immigrants exercise their “rights” and “duties” as citizens and vote in all elections.<sup>31</sup> Evoked in numerous editorials throughout the 1940s and 50s, the act of voting was equated with “liberty” and the “conservation of humanity”.<sup>32</sup> Related to the value placed on the democratic process was, perhaps unsurprisingly, especially considering the name of the newspaper, the acquisition of

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<sup>27</sup> Camillo Carli, “Unione e sinonimo di forza,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 May 1957, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Antonino Spada, “Il nuovo cittadino,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 June 1956, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Antonino Spada, “Il significato delle elezioni comunali,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 October 1954, 1; Antonino Spada, “Questi ludi elettorali,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 May 1956, 4; Antonino Spada, “Norme elettorali,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 April 1957, 4; Antonino Spada, “Le elezioni amministrazione,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 1 November 1957, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Antonino Spada, “Il nuovo cittadino,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 June 1956, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Antonino Spada, “Andate a votare, fate il vostro dovere,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 June 1945, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Antonino Spada, “Andate a votare: fate il vostro dovere: Voi siete gli artefici del vostro destino,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 June 1945, 1; Antonino Spada, “Andiamo a votare!,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 June 1956, 4.; Antonino Spada, “Le elezioni amministrative,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 1 November 1957, 4; Antonino Spada, “Il dovere del voto,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 28 March 1958, 2.



Canadian citizenship.<sup>33</sup> Legally speaking, citizenship would put Italian immigrants on the same footing as native-born Canadians.<sup>34</sup> Still, it was to be taken with great “seriousness” and included the obligation to be informed of Canadian social and economic issues.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, political participation and integration, at least to standards set by Italian elites, were intrinsically connected.

As early as 1943, Spada proclaimed “The Italian in Canada has proven, and proves every day, with the blood of his children, with his work, with his qualities, with his determination, that, notwithstanding the greatest of sacrifices and humiliations, he feels and is, Canadian.”<sup>36</sup> However, “Canadian”, as the Italians were well-aware, is a loosely defined term. “Who is Canadian?” was the question Spada rhetorically posed to his readers, when commenting on the multiple cleavages within Canadian society.<sup>37</sup> With no clear answer, Italian elites cultivated their own sense of Canadianess, where assimilation was not understood according to its usual definition. Instead, journalists promoted the maintenance of Italian culture across the generations, seeing no contradiction in practicing Old Country traditions, while adopting a “Canadian Way of Life”.<sup>38</sup> With regards to the political sphere, as Enzo Colla explained, Canada consists of a “mosaic of nationalities”. A view reinforced by the presence of French and English-Canadians in Montreal; collaboration was seen as “necessary” between them. Thus, Italian-Canadians were perceived as partaking in an already heterogeneous political culture. Quoting Prime Minister Saint Laurent, Colla asserted that the coexistence of multiple groups in the “public life” is essential to the development of the country.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, Italian-Canadian elites believed it was the “inalienable right” of community

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<sup>33</sup> *Il Cittadino Canadese* translates into *The Canadian Citizen*.

<sup>34</sup> Antonino Spada, “La nostra adesione,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 December 1946, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Frank Carena, “Prendiamo la cittadinanza con serietà,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 April 1953, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Antonino Spada, “Un piano da incoraggiare; Perché non chiamare i contadini italiani?,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 November 1943, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Antonino Spada, “Comprensione e tolleranza,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 December 1955, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Antonino Spada, “Un argomento serio,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 September 1956, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Enzo Colla, “Per un giudice italiano,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 May 1952, 2.

members to be represented in the municipal, provincial, and federal governments.<sup>40</sup> As Colla editorialized:

Citizenship does not entail only duties, but also rights. One cannot in fact pretend that a person finds himself at his leisure in a house, having been told 'This is your home', and then being forced to wash the floor. This person will continue to consider himself a servant, and consider others, those seated on the sofa, as the masters.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, shortly after the election of the first Italian-Canadian, Alfredo Gagliardi, to municipal office in 1950, Antonino Spada stated, "Since we have helped to build railroads, buildings, bridges, canals, and roads, it is also our right to go to the municipal council."<sup>42</sup>

## II. Alfredo Gagliardi, an Italian-Canadian Politician

Born in Montreal in 1920 to Italian parents, Alfredo Gagliardi was the first Italian-Canadian to penetrate the Montreal political realm of the post-World War II period. Educated at McGill University and Université de Montréal, Gagliardi was trilingual. Described as "being a good Canadian citizen, but also a good Italian", this young man was very active in community life. For instance, the year before his election, Gagliardi became the producer of an Italian-language radio show.<sup>43</sup> He was, as a result, a very well-known figure amongst Italian immigrants.<sup>44</sup> In fact, during his election campaign, with the full backing of community elites, Gagliardi utilized his popularity as well as his ethnicity to garner votes. In an open letter printed in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, Gagliardi called on Italians to "defend their name, their prestige and their race"; by voting for him. Dedicating very little space to his actual platform, the ambitious politician reminded Italians that "the first battle is always the most difficult". "Today it's me", he wrote, "that is asking to be sent to the municipal council, but tomorrow it could

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<sup>40</sup> Antonino Spada, "Entuistica assemblea, giovedì sera nel quartiere Montcalm in favore del candidato Alfredo Gagliardi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 December 1950, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Enzo Colla, "Per un giudice italiano," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 May 1952, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Antonino Spada, "Entuistica assemblea, giovedì sera nel quartiere Montcalm in favore del candidato Alfredo Gagliardi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 December 1950, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Giosafat Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montreal: Note e Profili. First Edition* (Montreal: Centro Italiano Attività Commerciali-Artistiche, 1957), 232.

<sup>44</sup> "Finalmente abbiamo un candidato italiano," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 November 1950, 1.

be you, your children, your grandchildren...” Gagliardi also emphasized that his election would accelerate the integration process of Italians, a step in achieving the same success as other Diaspora communities, such as New York and Buenos Aires.<sup>45</sup> In short, the election of an Italian-Canadian politician was seen, not only by Gagliardi, but also by Antonino Spada, as necessary in the Italian immigrant quest to “become Canadian.”<sup>46</sup>

Once elected, community elites rejoiced, convinced that Italians were “marching towards the conquest of civic, political and administrative positions” previously reserved for citizens of English or French descent.<sup>47</sup> Considered a sign of acceptance, the election of Gagliardi to municipal council, most importantly, meant a “voice” for the Italians of Montreal.<sup>48</sup> Fulfilling expectations, Gagliardi defended the community, for example, when a French-language newspaper insinuated that Italian immigrants were highly involved in illegal activity. Writing to the newspaper, as well as to the Canadian authorities, Gagliardi did not completely deny the charges. Instead, he claimed it was all but a small minority, desperate for a livelihood and therefore pushed into crime. He then stated that the integration of immigrants into the “social, economic and political order” was the responsibility of everyone.<sup>49</sup> In general, however, Gagliardi moved away from ethnically-specific issues while in office.<sup>50</sup> He was involved in numerous projects and believed in the unity of all people, regardless of ethnicity.<sup>51</sup> Speaking in three languages during his electoral campaign, Gagliardi also sought the support of citizens of non-

<sup>45</sup> “Siate tutti presenti alla grande assemblea di chiusura del candidate Alfredo Gagliardi, domenica alle ore 8pm al No.6645 St. Laurent,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 December 1950, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Antonino Spada, “Bisogna eleggere Gagliardi se vogliamo provare di essere diventati canadese,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 December 1950, 4.

<sup>47</sup> “La vittoria di Alfredo Gagliardi consacra l’unione degli italiani di Montreal,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 December 1950, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Gigi Revel, “Una voce per gli italiani di Canada,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 April 1954, 1.

<sup>49</sup> “Vibrata protesta del consigliere Gagliardi contro calunnie sui nuovi arrivati italiani,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 October 1953, 1.

<sup>50</sup> “Saranno le elezioni municipali avanzate di un mese?: Proposta del nostro consigliere Alfredo Gagliardi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 January 1951, 1; “Gagliardi e la Croce Rossa,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 February 1953, 1; “Gagliardi fa votare la pensione al sindaco Houde,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 November 1952, 1; “Gagliardi propone un ‘referendum’ per la metro di Montreal,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 December 1953, 1; “Il sogno di una carriera politica: 1.200.000 per lavori pubblici in Montcalm: Alfredi Gagliardi ottiene un centro civico che fara onore al nostro distretto, Alleanza Filion-Gagliardi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 August 1954, 1.

<sup>51</sup> “La vittoria di Alfredo Gagliardi consacra l’unione degli italiani di Montreal,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 December 1950, 1.

Italian origin.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, throughout his career, Alfredo Gagliardi was considered, both by Italians and non-Italians, as a representative for the community, a role he unreservedly carried out.

Seeking election in the heavily Italian-concentrated riding of Laurier in East Montreal, under the banner of the Union Nationale, Paul Provençal aggressively courted the support of the Italian-Canadian electorate during the 1952 provincial elections. Campaigning with the slogan, "A vote for Paul Provençal is a vote for Gagliardi, for the Italians", Provençal, as one of his tactics, relied on the esteem and collaboration of the Italian-Canadian municipal councilor. Proclaiming that the "Italian era in Quebec" began in 1950, with the election of Gagliardi, the French-Canadian politician evoked "ethnic" issues, namely the desire on the part of the community for the appointment of an Italian judge, an Italian member of provincial parliament as well as the establishment of an Italian orphanage and an Italian hospital, while claiming to be in favour of these demands. Evidently gaining the support of the community's elite, Paul Provençal, as advertised in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, spoke at the Italian Church, *La Madonna Della Difesa*, shortly before the election. In fact, this trilingual assembly, attended by Camillien Houde, Montreal's major, and various Italian-Canadian elites, including Alfredo Gagliardi, exemplified the behaviour of "majority" politicians towards their "ethnic" voters and vice versa.<sup>53</sup> Prominent English and French-Canadians were frequently invited to events held by Italian-Canadian intellectuals or entrepreneurs.<sup>54</sup> Used as a means to voice the needs of Italian immigrants, "majority" politicians, in turn, expressed "friendship" towards the community, often referring, as Prime Minister St. Laurent did, to the "glory" of Italy's civilization and its people. It was, indeed, very

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<sup>52</sup> "Entusiastica assemblea, giovedì sera nel quartiere Montcalm in favore del candidato Alfredo Gagliardi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 December 1950, 6; "Gagliardi propone un 'referendum' per la metro di Montreal," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 December 1953, 1; "Il sogno di una carriera politica, 1.200.000 per lavori pubblici in Montcalm: Alfredo Gagliardi ottiene un centro civico che farà onore al nostro distretto," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 August 1954, 2.

<sup>53</sup> "L'era italiana nel Quebec," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 11 July 1952, 5.

<sup>54</sup> "Le piu alte personalita di Montreal presenti al banchetto degli uomini d'affari italo-canadese," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 December 1953, 1; "Nella nostra colonia: il discorso del Presidente della C.I.B.P.A.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 November 1955, 4; "Proficua riunione degli Uomini d'Affari Italo-Canadesi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 8 November 1957, 1.

common to see the use of such language before municipal, provincial, and federal elections.<sup>55</sup>

After a successful first term in office, Alfredo Gagliardi sought re-election in 1954, as municipal councilor. After citing his many accomplishments, Antonino Spada wrote in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, "Gagliardi has done his job, now it is time to do ours."<sup>56</sup> Encouraging its readers to look past personal reservations and ideological divergences, the Italian-language newspaper incited "Italians to vote Italian". The solution to the problems that plagued the immigrant community, voting for politicians of Italian descent, in this case Alfredo Gagliardi, Colombo Teodori, Giacomo Tozzi, and Guglielmo Remiggi, was, according to Ermanno LaRiccia, a journalist, the Italian-Canadian "duty".<sup>57</sup> In particular, Gagliardi's campaign team overtly appealed to downtrodden Italian immigrants, maintaining that he, a "brother", speaks their "language", both literally and figuratively.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, Alfredo Gagliardi was re-elected, along with Giacomo Tozzi. Although *Il Cittadino Canadese* celebrated the victories as a means to "protect" the disadvantaged members of the community and advance Italian-Canadian "interests", there were, nevertheless, much broader implications.<sup>59</sup> As evidenced by Gagliardi, who beat out his rival by 2, 700 voices, the winning candidates succeeded in earning a significant amount of votes from Canadians of other ethnic backgrounds, not only Italian. Thus, these elections signified, in the eyes of Spada, that Italians were no longer a "minority" in Montreal.<sup>60</sup> Closer to achieving the

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<sup>55</sup> "L'era italiana nel Quebec," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 11 July 1952, 5; "Siate fieri d'essere italiani": il deputato Azellus Denis presenta gli oratori," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 March 1953, 2; "Il messaggio dell'On. St. Laurent conferma la sua amicizia," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 August 1953, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Antonino Spada, "Votate per la vittoria, votate per rieleggere Alfredo Gagliardi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 22 October 1954, 1.

<sup>57</sup> "Il Comitato per la vittoria di Alfredo Gagliardi, Elettori italiani del Distretto No.6," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 22 October 1954, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Antonino Spada, "Alfredo Gagliardi diventa schiera: teodori candidato a St. Henry, Ramiggi a Villeray, Alfredo conduce il nome italiano alla vittoria," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 October 1954, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Antonino Spada, "Imponente vittoria elettorale di Alfredo Gagliardi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 October 1954, 1.

<sup>60</sup> Antonino Spada, "Alfredo Gagliardi diventa schiera: Teodori candidato a St. Henry, Ramiggi a Villeray, Alfredo conduce il nome italiano alla vittoria," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 October 1954, 1.

“ideal”, the “Italian-Canadian soul”, the editor-in-chief proclaimed, “is fully Italian, fully Canadian.”<sup>61</sup>

A notable exception, particular attention was paid to female voters during the election campaign. In 1954, the “women of Italy” were “called to the polls”, warned that by not voting, they would be counted amongst the “deserters”.<sup>62</sup> Usually absent in *Il Cittadino Canadese*’s political propaganda, women, in general, were ignored by the newspaper. Assuming a strong male voice, the Italian-language publication failed to address the specific needs of women or reduced them to an “innocuous” weekly column, written by Antonino Spada’s daughter, Armida.<sup>63</sup> “Do we not exist?” asked one female reader, in a letter to the editor, commenting on the difficulties that both sexes faced in Canada.<sup>64</sup> With regards to political participation, Italian-Canadian women were neither expected nor encouraged to strive to acquire high-ranking positions. With duties lying in the home, women were to “exercise their ‘grand mission’ within the family, for the benefit of the family”.<sup>65</sup> However, women did have a political role to play, albeit relegated to the informal sphere and highly influenced by Catholic culture. More specifically, in an article entitled *Una donna in politica (A Woman in Politics)*, Igino Giordani, a contributor, outlined the virtues of Saint Catherine of Siena, as exemplifying the Italian female ideal. Exalted for her patriotism, humility, and servitude, Italian women were convinced to emulate her “Christian charity”.<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, Italian-Canadian women in Montreal, when active in community life, were almost exclusively involved in Italian community organizations, coordinating, for example, fundraising campaigns for charities or cultural events. Though receiving little notice otherwise, they

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<sup>61</sup> Antonino Spada, “Appello alle donne Elettrici,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 22 October 1954, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Antonino Spada, “Votate per la vittoria, votate per rieleggere Alfredo Gagliardi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 22 October 1954, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Susanna Iuliano, *Constructing Italian Ethnicity: A Comparative Study of Two Italian Language Newspapers in Australia and in Canada, 1947-1957* (MA: McGill University, 1994), 117.

<sup>64</sup> “Letter” La Rubrica Gentile, *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 November 1951, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Enzo Chimisso, “La donna moderna,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 December 195, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Igino Giordani, “Una donna in politica,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 December 1947, 5.

were, nevertheless, congratulated for their efforts in these instances.<sup>67</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 4, it was not until the rise of second wave feminism that Italian-Canadian women assumed a more public role.

### III. Pressure Group Politics: The Increasing Italian-Canadian Presence in Montreal

On the eve of the 1957 municipal elections, the mayor of Montreal, Jean Drapeau, announced funding for an Italian hospital, to be located in St-Michel, a northeast end neighbourhood with a strong Italian presence. Antonino Spada did not disregard the timely announcement as politically-motivated. Instead, he recognized the role the Drapeau-Desmarais administration played, essentially expressing his gratitude, while referring to the “hard work” of certain individuals, leading to the necessary grant.<sup>68</sup> Behind the project, in addition to the Santa Cabrini Sisters, were Giacomo Tozzi, a municipal councilor, Doctor Gian Paolo Larini and the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association (C.I.B.P.A).<sup>69</sup> An affirmation of the Italian presence in the metropolis, the hospital was, in effect, the product of years of lobbying on the part of Italian-Canadian elites. More specifically, the C.I.B.P.A, for example, though primarily a business-oriented organization, aimed to ameliorate the economic conditions of Italian immigrants<sup>70</sup>, primarily by providing them with various forms of social assistance.<sup>71</sup> An elitist association, they were, nevertheless, effective in placing the needs of the Italian-Canadian masses on the political agenda, as evidenced by the *Ospedale Italiano Santa Cabrini* and *Orfanotrofio San Giuseppe*, located relatively close to the hospital. The orphanage, also the result of an “intense campaign”, was originally established in 1922, and then expanded in 1955 with the financial aid of the provincial

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<sup>67</sup> “Comitato Attivita Culturali della Casa d’Italia-Resocanto di Giovanna d’Auria alla nostra comunita,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 July 1951, 1; “Oltre \$1,110,000 raccolti dalla federazione opere di carita delle parrocchie di Montreal,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 April 1959, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Antonino Spada, “L’ospedale italiano a Montreal, e una realta di fatto,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 October 1957, 1-2.

<sup>69</sup> Giosafat Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montreal: Note e Profili. Second Edition* (Montreal: Centro Italiano Attivita Commerciali-Artistiche, 1972), 144.

<sup>70</sup> Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montreal: Note e profile. First Edition...*, 79.

<sup>71</sup> “Nella nostra Colonia: il discorso del Presidente della CIBPA,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 November 1955, 4.

and municipal governments, as well as Italian-Canadian associations.<sup>72</sup> The pride of the community, the two institutions were headed by Italian nuns and praised, not only for what they signified to Italian immigrants, but also because of the moral and religious weight they carried.<sup>73</sup> Open to all, irrespective of ethnicity, Italian-Canadians truly believed they were making a contribution to Montreal.<sup>74</sup>

More broadly, by the late 1950s, the image of Montreal's Little Italy was well-embedded in the minds of English and French-Canadians. Lined with Italian businesses, community institutions and inhabited by many immigrants, the area surrounding Jean Talon Street, indeed, exuded a certain "ambience".<sup>75</sup> Attaining a degree of comfort, here Italians gathered on street corners, attended religious processions, and discussed in European-style cafés.<sup>76</sup> Yet, because of the immigrants' un-Canadian ways and "propensity for clustering", the neighbourhood was, to a certain extent, "othered" by outside observers.<sup>77</sup> Even Canadian authorities expressed concern with regards to Italian-Canadian residential patterns. "Isolated", Little Italy was blamed for the "retarded assimilation process" of new arrivals, as well as being an enclave where "gangsterism" thrived and men and women lived in complete "ignorance" of the rest of the country.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps in response to this negative representation, the intellectual and economic elite worked to assert the collectivity's place in the public sphere, encouraging the open celebration of an Italian-Canadian identity. Demarcating the area as an Italian neighborhood, not simply by nature of its residents, "Italian Day", for example, was held in Belmont Park and attracted 25, 000 people. Hosted by the Order of Italian-Canadians and wealthy members of the community, with the participation of prominent French-

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<sup>72</sup> "Benedizione dell'Orfanotrofio," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 December 1955, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montrea: Note e profilel. First Edition*, 99-105.

<sup>74</sup> Antonino Spada, 'L'ospedale italiano a Montreal, e una realta di fatto," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 October 1957, 1-2.

<sup>75</sup> Bruno Ramirez, "Decline, Death, and Revival of 'Little Italies': The Canadian and U.S Experiences Compared," *Studi Emigrazione* 44 (December 2007), 340.

<sup>76</sup> John Zucchi, *Une histoire des enclaves ethniques du Canada* (Ottawa: Société historique du Canada, 2007, Coll. "Les groupes ethniques du Canada," Brochure no.31), 2.

<sup>77</sup> Ramirez, "Decline, Death, and Revival...", 341; Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People...*, 103-104.

<sup>78</sup> Pietro Accolti, "Nella Little Italy di Montreal domina uno stretto spirito di clan," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 17 July 1959, 3.



Canadians, the day was deemed a success.<sup>79</sup> In fact, many similar events were held in the city.<sup>80</sup> Thus, concrete actions were taken on the part of the elite to increase Italian-Canadian visibility, a phenomenon going hand in hand with an enhanced political presence.

Frequently speaking on behalf of the community, the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association's political role merits further examination. The most noticeable Italian-Canadian organization in Montreal, the C.I.B.P.A hosted annual golf tournaments and elaborate banquets, events well-attended by leading French and English-Canadians.<sup>81</sup> Founded in 1949, the association, above all, strived to represent the "best" of the Italian-Canadian "element" to broader Quebecois society.<sup>82</sup> Open to any Italian-Canadian, the Association was, nevertheless, dominated by wealthy businessmen, lawyers and doctors, in other words, the elites of the postwar period.<sup>83</sup> Related to its role in Canadian politics, it is important to note that politicians of Italian descent, especially Alfredo Gagliardi, were affiliated with the C.I.B.P.A. As full-fledged member, the young politician was often an honoured guest at its events<sup>84</sup> and received an open letter of congratulation upon his re-election in 1954.<sup>85</sup> Significantly, Gagliardi also served as an intermediary between the C.I.B.P.A and the Canadian authorities. For example, he presented, on the part of the Association, a car to Montreal's mayor, Camillien Houde, in 1953, expressing gratitude for the French-Canadian politician's

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<sup>79</sup> "Un successo caloroso ha arreso alla 'Giornata Italiana' al Parco Belmont," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 August 1960, 2; "Le manifestazioni italo-canadesi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 July 1959, 10.

<sup>80</sup> "La comunita italiana offrira un banchetto a Segni e Pella," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 September 1959, 1; "Le manifestazioni italo-canadesi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 July 1959, 10; "L'ottavo torneo annuale di golf organizzato dalla C.I.B.P.A.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 August 1960, 8.

<sup>81</sup> "Le piu alte personalita di Montreal presenti al banchetto degli uomini d'affari italo-canadese," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 December 1953, 1; "Nella nostra colonia: Il discorso del Presidente della C.I.B.P.A.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 November 1955, 4; "Proficua riunione degli Uomini d'Affari Italo-Canadesi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 8 November 1957, 1.

<sup>82</sup> Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montreal. Note e profile. First Edition...*, 79-81.

<sup>83</sup> "L'ottavo torneo di golf organizzato dalla C.I.B.P.A.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 August 1960, 8.

<sup>84</sup> Menalao. "Strepitose successo del banchetto alle ostriche sotto il patronato di A. Gagliardi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 8 October 1954, 1.

<sup>85</sup> "Societa Uomini d'Affari, Comunicato," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 November 1954, 1-2.

“friendship” and “kindness” towards Italian-Canadians.<sup>86</sup> Yet, Gagliardi did not receive open or financial support from the C.I.B.P.A during elections campaigns, nor was the organization ever directly involved. Thus, while the institution trained, and made use of, ambitious Italian-Canadians, who later assumed prominent positions in broader Canadian society, its actual influence in electoral politics was quite negligible. In essence, the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association’s political activities lay in the informal sphere, serving, in sum, as a lobby group. Believed that the benefits of its actions would “trickle-down” to disadvantaged Italian immigrants<sup>87</sup>, Antonino Spada proclaimed as early as 1953, “The success of the businessmen success is our success”<sup>88</sup>.

Quite plausibly, though not necessarily, the result of the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association’s efforts, Pietro Sciortino was appointed Queen’s Counsel in 1955.<sup>89</sup> Born in 1918 to Sicilian immigrants, he was considered a “symbol” by the community, due to his success as well as his loyalty.<sup>90</sup> For instance, as a graduate of the McGill University Faculty of Law, the young Italian-Canadian spent the early years of his career, in addition to working for a law firm, defending the rights of Italians at risk for deportation.<sup>91</sup> Of course, Montreal Italian-Canadians were then ecstatic when the news broke of his promotion to the position of judge, to preside over the *Cour des Sessions de la Paix*, in 1959.<sup>92</sup> *Il Cittadino Canadese*, in particular, published a special issue for the occasion, printing congratulatory advertisements from all the major organizations and businesses within the community. Here, both Italian and “majority” elites interpreted Sciortino’s appointment as an indication of the Italian-Canadian contribution to Canada, while presenting the decision, taken by the provincial

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<sup>86</sup> “I Canadesi Italiani hanno offerto un’automobile al sindaco Houde,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 August 1953, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Dara Strolovitch, *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class and Gender in Interest Group Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 78.

<sup>88</sup> Spada Antonino, “Le piu alte personalita di Montreal presenti al banchetto degli uomini d’affari italo-canadesi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 December 1953, 1.

<sup>89</sup> “La communita italiana festeggia P. Sciortino,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 February 1955, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montreal: Note e profile. First Edition...*, 244.

<sup>91</sup> “Cenni biografici sul neo-Giudice,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 May 1959 (Special Issue), 8.

<sup>92</sup> Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montreal: Note e profile. First Edition...*, 243.

government, as “respectful of minority rights” within Quebec.<sup>93</sup> Proclaimed a “national holiday” by Nicola Ciamarra, the Italian-language newspaper even interviewed Sciortino’s family, who was “beyond words”.<sup>94</sup> Astounded that a son of immigrants could attain such a high-ranking position, Ciamarra emphasized the key role that descendants of Italian immigrants will eventually come to play in Canadian society.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, when evoking the struggle on the part of all Italian immigrants to facilitate the advancement of their children, including his parents, Pietro Sciortino stated, “In us, continues the work of our fathers”.<sup>96</sup> Thus, as evidenced by the success of this Italian-Canadian judge, the community elite in the 1950s perceived Italian-Canadians to be an ethnic group on the rise. Not without difficult challenges to face in the future, its fate, nevertheless, lay in the hands of its current members, with the power to determine the social status of generations of Italian-Canadians.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, in the eyes of Italian immigrants, collective and individual successes were linked, the former being even more important than the latter.<sup>98</sup>

#### IV. The Solidification of the Italian-Canadian Political Elite

From 1958 to 1960, *Il Cittadino Canadese* published numerous articles addressing issues specific to the Montreal Italian community. Throughout the series, Nicola Ciamarra interviewed Italian-Canadian entrepreneurs and professionals, including, for example, owners of construction companies, engineers and priests.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “Il rispetto delle minoranze e la forza del nostro paese,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 May 1959 (Special Issue), 1.

<sup>94</sup> “Il nostro incontro con i genitori di S.O: Papa e mamma Sciortino non trovano le parole adatte,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 May 1959 (Special Issue), 5.

<sup>95</sup> “...Una pietra miliare del cammino dell’immigrazione italiana in Canada,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 May 1959 (Special Issue), 6.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Antonino Spada, “Idiosincrasie dei primi tempi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 December 1955, 4.

<sup>98</sup> This was a running theme throughout the documentary, *Dimanche D’Amérique...* The narrator, Arthur Lamothe, underscores the emphasis placed on the collectivity, versus the individual, within the community. He states, “Pour les italiens issus de l’immigration, la réussite collective vaut plus que la réussite individuelle.” This belief was reflected in *Il Cittadino Canadese*.

<sup>99</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “I problemi della nostra comunità: l’opinione pubblica parla: creare la ‘mentra dirigente’ della colonia,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 December 1958, 2; Nicola Ciamarra, “I problemi della nostra comunità: l’opinione pubblica parla: lo hanno fatto gli altri, facciamo pure noi,” *Il*

Although the theme of unity was always present in the newspaper, during this series, the message became stronger, due, most likely, to the adjustment of the collectivity to Canadian society. Less preoccupied with the basics of acculturation, Italian-Canadians were now concerned with ameliorating their living conditions and ready to seek concrete solutions. Acknowledging the class cleavage within the collectivity, Ciamarra commanded the community elite to “take initiative”.<sup>100</sup> Especially in comparison to the generous philanthropy, as well as strong leadership, practiced by the Jewish elite, Italian-Canadian businessmen did not fulfill expectations.<sup>101</sup> Accused of being “afraid”, they were portrayed as self-interested, promoting the “folkloric and parochial aspects” of Italian-Canadian culture, while ignoring the “essentials”, namely the rampant poverty within the collectivity.<sup>102</sup> In the concluding article, the interviewees stressed the unchecked “exploitation” of Italian workers, “insufficient assistance” in resolving work-related issues, “very few cultural activities” and a “lack of leadership” capable of representing the Italian collectivity to broader Canadian society, issues that inhibited the community from becoming a potential “third force”.<sup>103</sup> In spite of the harsh critique, the full participation of the economic elite was, nevertheless, recognized as indispensable in order to increase the Italian-Canadian “social capital”.<sup>104</sup> Its role was expected, by both the intellectual and working-classes, to be similar to the financial and moral support

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*Cittadino Canadese*, 16 January 1959, 2; Nicola Ciamarra, “I problemi della nostra comunità: l’opinione pubblica parla: noi italiani non siamo ancora popolo!,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 January 1959, 2.

<sup>100</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “L’opinione pubblica parla: un gruppo di industriali dovrebbe prendere l’iniziativa,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 January 1959, 2.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*; Nicola Ciamarra, “I problemi della comunità italo-canadese: la nostra grande miseria: Una soluzione,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 September 1958, 2; Nicola Ciamarra, “I problemi della comunità italiana di Montreal: l’opinione pubblica parla: I ricchi della nostra comunità hanno troppa paura,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 March 1959, 3; Nicola Ciamarra, “Gli slovacchi e noi: il centro dei cinquemila e lo zero dei centomila,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 March 1959, 2; Nicola Ciamarra, “A proposito delle celebrazioni cabottiane: l’importanza del capitale sociale: Mettiamoci alla prova,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 June 1959, 2.

<sup>102</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “I ricchi della nostra comunità hanno troppa paura,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 March 1959, 3; Camillo Carli, “Il diritto al lavoro,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 May 1960, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Ermanno LaRiccia, “Concludiamo l’inchiesta sulla comunità italiana: siamo un città di 100,000 abitanti, ma rappresentiamo la forza di una tribù,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 December 1960, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “L’importanza del capitale sociale: mettiamoci alla prova,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 June 1959, 2.

given by Montreal's Bronfmans to the institutions of the Jewish community, in particular the Canadian Jewish Congress.<sup>105</sup>

Imitating the Jewish "organizational style"<sup>106</sup>, the National Congress of Italian-Canadians, it was believed, would enable Italians to "solve their collective problems". "New arrivals", as one Italian-Canadian interviewee emphasized, "need guidance, in order to integrate into Canadian society and only an association would accomplish this task."<sup>107</sup> Serving as an umbrella organization, unifying the collectivity's numerous associations, the "Federation" would be the sole political representative of the community, articulating its members' needs to the municipal, provincial and federal governments.<sup>108</sup> Headed by the already-established political and entrepreneurial elite, it would also, in theory, eliminate "regionalism" amongst Italian immigrants. The phenomenon at the root of disunity, it was very much reflected in the Diaspora's institutional dynamic and the cause, as the writings of the Italian-language newspaper substantiate, of great distress on the part of its leadership.<sup>109</sup> It was not until the linguistic debate, however, that the National Congress of Italian-Canadians would come into being, in 1974. Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin address this change in Italian-Canadian leadership, arguing the following:

A l'intérieur de la communauté italienne, cette résistance à la francisation a provoqué l'émergence d'un mouvement social sans précédent, accélérant et renforçant la restructuration de la communauté dans son

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<sup>105</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, "I problemi della nostra comunità: L'opinione pubblica parla: il Centro Sociale Italo-Canadese si farà," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 31 October 1958, 2; Ermanno LaRiccia, "Alla scoperta della comunità italiana: chiederemo al governo il controllo costante sull'applicazione delle legge dei salari minimi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 8 July 1960, 4.

<sup>106</sup> Jedwab and Rosenberg, "Institutional Completeness, Ethnic Organizational Style and the Role of the State...", 266.

<sup>107</sup> Ermanno La Riccia, "Alla scoperta della comunità italiana: il problema associativo visto dagli esponenti di una nuova associazione," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 May 1960, 4.

<sup>108</sup> Ermanno La Riccia, "Alla scoperta della comunità italiana: 'il partito senza partito'," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 June 1960, 4; Ermanno La Riccia, "Concludiamo l'inchiesta sulla comunità italiana: siamo una città di 100.000 abitanti, ma rappresentiamo la forza di una tribù," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 December 1960, 4.

<sup>109</sup> Ermanno La Riccia, "Alla scoperta della comunità italiana: il problema associativo visto dagli esponenti di una nuova associazione," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 May 1960, 4; Nicola Ciamarra, "Mettiamo da parte il 'gioco' del vecchi e nuovi arrivati se vogliono farci onore," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 April 1959, 3; Ermanno La Riccia, "Alla scoperta della comunità italiana: le nostre istituzioni e le nostre associazioni," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 11 November 1960, 4.

ensemble sous l'hégémonie d'un nouveau leadership étroitement associé à une bourgeoisie italo-québécoise montante.<sup>110</sup>

As evidenced by the interviews conducted by Nicola Ciamarra, it is nevertheless essential to note the extent that the Italian-Canadian businessmen already yielded considerable power, and benefited from significant clout, amongst Italian-Canadians beforehand. The language debate was thus the catalyst, not the cause of institutional unity. Most importantly, it was in the late 1950s that *Il Cittadino Canadese* further anointed and solidified the Italian-Canadian political elite. These men then officially took over with the onset of language legislation, essentially rendering official a tendency that previously existed.

Ironically, especially considering the emphasis on unity prevalent in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, Alfredo Gagliardi and Antonino Spada became bitter competitors while seeking election in the same riding during the 1960 municipal elections. Conducting smear campaigns against one another, this incidence highlights the precariousness of the collectivity's internal dynamic, even amongst its leadership.<sup>111</sup> Swiftly condemned by the other institutions of the community, the issue was addressed at a banquet hosted by the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association. Though acknowledging the "democratic" character of debate, the guest of honour, the lawyer Bruno Pateras, denounced mean-spirited divisiveness, as seen in 1960, as "un-Christian" and "self-destructive".<sup>112</sup> However, the most interesting analysis came from Dr. Salvatore Mancuso, in an interview with Nicola Ciamarra. Referring to the numerous Italian-Canadians running for office, under the banners of different parties, he asserted that ideological heterogeneity should be viewed as an indication of the Italian "vitality" and "interest for all ideas and tendencies", not "discord." "Ten years ago", he continued, "no one would have ever believed that we would display such an interest in the politics of our city. This demonstrates, once again, that our community is well-integrated into

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<sup>110</sup> Painchaud and Poulin, "Italianité, conflit linguistique...", 97.

<sup>111</sup> Antonino Spada, "Non rispondono alle insinuazioni; ma sfido!!: provare o tacere," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 14 October 1960, 2.

<sup>112</sup> "L'avvenire della nostra comunità dipende dalla nostra buona volontà di uomini liberi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 November 1960, 2.

Canadian life.”<sup>113</sup> Perhaps an overly positive interpretation of the Gagliardi versus Spada rivalry, the Mancuso discussion, nonetheless, underscores the political maturity of the community, at least in comparison to the early 1950s. Italians were, firstly, able to disagree with each other in public and secondly, involved enough in municipal politics to do so.

Undoubtedly, there was a remarkable improvement concerning the political representation of Italian-Canadians in Montreal’s government since the election of Alfredo Gagliardi in 1950. In addition to Gagliardi, who remained a councilor until 1962, in 1952, Giacomo Tozzi was elected municipal councilor, and continued until 1960. Colombo Teodori was appointed in 1958 and even, the first Italian-Canadian Member of Provincial Parliament, Camillo Martellani, commenced his career as municipal councilor in 1960, before moving up the National Assembly in 1966.<sup>114</sup> Running in ridings with high proportions of Italian immigrants, Italian-Canadian politicians depended on the demographic strength of the collectivity during electoral campaigns. For this reason, Nicola Ciamarra vehemently opposed the re-drawing of the Montreal electoral map, the result of a commission that aimed to modernize and democratize the city’s institutions.<sup>115</sup> Referring to the *Rapport Champagne* of 1960, Ciamarra argued that, “in practice”, the election of ethnic minorities would be rendered nearly impossible, as they could no longer rely on their communities of origin to garner votes. “Discriminatory”, the reformed ridings, dividing Italian-Canadians, were perceived, by Ciamarra, as impeding the affirmation of all ethnic minorities in the metropolis.”<sup>116</sup> In general, however, Italian-Canadians manifested confidence towards the institutions of their adopted country and respected the nature of its democracy. Politicians were described as being “competent” and when discrimination existed, save immigration quotas, it was perceived as popular and not government-directed.<sup>117</sup> As will

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<sup>113</sup> Ermanno LaRiccia, “Osservatorio politico: civismo e solidarietà: I soli messi per qualificarci,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 14 October, 1960, 4.

<sup>114</sup> Antonino Spada, *The Italians in Canada* (Montréal: Riviera and Publishers Inc., 1969), 216.

<sup>115</sup> Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal: Boréal, 2000), 544.

<sup>116</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “I problemi della nostra metropoli: i poteri della Commissione Champagne insufficienti; Il rapporto incompleto. Che fare?,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 September 1960, 2.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

be discussed in Chapter 3, there was, nevertheless, a notable change in attitude after the Saint-Leonard School Crisis of 1967, effecting the integration of Italian-Canadians into, and attitudes towards, Quebecois society.

To conclude, Italians-Canadians were very involved in Montreal politics and even relatively successful at penetrating the ranks of the municipal government. The most accessible echelon, this was viewed as the first step in achieving provincial and federal representation, the ultimate goal for the intellectual class. Yet, the formal system was only one of the many political spheres infiltrated by the Italian-Canadian community from 1945-1960. The entrepreneurial and professional elite asserted the community's presence in the metropolis, organizing public events and establishing Italian-specific institutions. Although undervalued, Italian women also played a role in the collectivity's political life as fundraisers and coordinators. A time of optimism, Italian-Canadians genuinely presumed that they were making a significant contribution to Canadian society. Accordingly, Italian-Canadians no longer maintained an immigrant group perspective, but, instead, adopted the viewpoint of an ethnic minority. Journalists evoked the collectivity's numerical strength, as the largest group in Quebec after the two founding peoples. Seen as a source of power by the community, Italians believed they could become a "third force" in Canada, thus integrating, essentially, as a collectivity into a country with long-standing cleavages.<sup>118</sup>

Finally, by developing its leadership, institutional network, and relations with French and English-Canadian politicians in the early years of the community's acculturation and adjustment, the entrepreneurial and intellectual classes effectively prepared the community to face the challenges of Quebec neo-nationalism, especially the language debate. With an established political culture, Italian-Canadians quickly mobilized when the school board of Saint-Léonard, a heavily Italian concentrated suburb, changed its language of instruction from English to French in 1967. Greatly concerned about the socio-economic future of Italian-Canadian children, the entrepreneurial and political elite adopted an assertive attitude, articulating Italian-

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<sup>118</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, "Se e perche mi presenterei: consigliere dei neo-canadesi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 August 1960, 2; Ermanno La Riccia, "Siamo un citta di 100,000 abitanti, ma rappresentiamo la forza de una tribu," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 December 1960, 4.



Canadian needs via the traditional channels of C.I.B.P.A events and municipal politics. In particular, the National Congress of Italian-Canadians, the idea of which originated in the late 1950s, enabled the community to express its unique viewpoint, as neither English nor French. Well-placed to defend their choice of English-language education, as well as actively participate in the Quebecois labour movement, Italian-Canadians indeed greatly influenced the outcome of the Quiet Revolution. Its contribution, as Chapter 3 will further delineate, was, needless to say, distinct.

## Chapter 2

### The Italian-Canadian Quiet Revolution: Active Participants in the Labour Movement and Language Debate, 1960-1977

With the victory of Jean Lesage's Liberals in 1960, Quebec was ushered into a new chapter of its history, commonly referred to as the Quiet Revolution. As an important component of the movement, a new generation of politicians worked expressly in the interests of the French-Canadian majority. Seeking to eliminate the disparity in wealth and power between French and English-speakers, the elected governments enacted language legislation in order to ensure the primacy of French.<sup>1</sup> As Montreal's largest allophone group, the Italian community thus occupied a precarious place in "modern" Quebecois society. Caught in the "neo-nationalist wave" that defined the period, the collectivity defended its choice of English-language instruction, commencing with the Saint-Leonard School Crisis of 1967, until the enactment of Bill 101 in 1977.<sup>2</sup> Though opposing neo-nationalist goals in matters of education, Italian workers nevertheless joined forces with francophone unionists in the ranks of the *Fédération des travailleurs québécois* (FTQ) and the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (CSN).<sup>3</sup> In fact defining its political participation throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Italian-Canadian collectivity, as I will argue, was determined to overcome its position at the bottom of the social ladder. By contributing to the Quebec labour movement, as well as actively participating in the language debate, the community strived to ameliorate its standard of living and guarantee the future prosperity of its children. Underscoring its integration, the viewpoints articulated by the collectivity were inspired by its status as a Montreal ethnic, as opposed to immigrant, community.

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<sup>1</sup> John Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 305.

<sup>2</sup> Donat Taddeo and Raymond Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1987), 95.

<sup>3</sup> Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec* (Hull: Les éditions Asticou/Les éditions Critiques, 1988), 97.

As the following chapter will illustrate, the importance of traditional political participation during the 1960-1977 time period, though not disappearing, was relegated to the backburner. Acculturated to Canadian society, including its political system, community elites were now more concerned with improving the poor working and living conditions of Italian immigrants, than political representation. Significantly, however, the necessity of formal and informal political activism was increasingly brought to light. By the late 1950s, many articles in *Il Cittadino Canadese* were dedicated to the Italian immigrant experience in the workforce, offering a critical perspective of life in Canada. Infused with an immigrant- and worker-inspired ideology, journalists and activists explicitly encouraged community members to join unions and to strike. Well-aware of the structural barriers facing them in Canada, both Italian elites and the immigrant masses looked instead to the next generation to achieve success. Italian parents thus opposed the 1968 decision of the Saint-Léonard school board, a Montreal suburb with a strong Italian presence, when it sought to change the language of instruction from English, the key to social mobility, to French in the schools attended by the community's children.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, by the late 1960s, community resources were increasingly directed towards defending free choice in matters of education for young Italian-Canadians. Mounting a resistance, involving all aspects of the group's leadership, including Italian Churches, unionists, journalists, and the entrepreneurial elite, Italian-Canadians mobilized *en masse*. Provoking the unification of the community's institutions in 1972, the language debate solidified the Italian-Canadian identity, while it, also, as we will see, led to internal dissent and political heterogeneity amongst community members.

## **I. The Development and Expression of the Italian-Canadian Working-Class Identity**

The years between 1960 and 1980 were a period of "almost unbroken prosperity". Large factories defined the urban landscape, as Canada's industrial economy, which had matured during the Second World War, reached its "apogee". With a booming population, due to high birth and immigration rates, and a steadily rising

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<sup>4</sup> Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec...*, 323.

Gross Domestic Product, social programs, such as pension plans and universal health care, finally became available, since the country, essentially, was rich. In spite of this “affluence”, there was nevertheless, as historians observe, considerable “discontent” amongst the less fortunate segments of the population.<sup>5</sup> Even in 1960, unemployment reached near Depression levels in Quebec<sup>6</sup> and Montreal, by that time a “regional centre”, instead of the Canadian “metropolis”, was particularly hard hit, as were its working-classes.<sup>7</sup> Vulnerable and ill-paid, they turned to Quebec’s unions, which, like the rest of society, were inspired by the ideologies and aspirations of the Quiet Revolution. Breaking from the general Canadian “conservatism” and “complacency” of the 1950s<sup>8</sup>, unions in the francophone province sought to extend their influence, increase their memberships, and push the limits of the State.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Montreal’s Italian community was also affected by the airs of change. Seeking to “rejuvenate”, after the stale debates surrounding Alfredo Gagliardi in the 1950s, the collectivity was enthusiastic with regards to the election of Jean Lesage and his ambitious program.<sup>10</sup> Although it had its own demands, including a more welcoming attitude towards immigrants, both in theory and in practice, and more schools for Italian-Canadian children, the community shared the need, as well as desire, for the enactment of labour legislation and increased unionization.<sup>11</sup> Having proven themselves as equally hard workers<sup>12</sup>, Italian-Canadians were no longer willing to settle for second-class citizenship in the Canadian workforce.<sup>13</sup> Since they were disadvantaged as both workers and immigrants, this attitude also applied to Quebec’s unions.

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Bothwell, *The Penguin History of Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006), 404-409.

<sup>6</sup> Desmond Morton, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 239.

<sup>7</sup> Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec.....*, 312.

<sup>8</sup> Morton, *Working People.....*, 239.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Rouillard, *Le syndicalisme québécois: Deux siècles d’histoire* (Montréal: Boréal, 2004), 139-149.

<sup>10</sup> Minimo, “L’esperienza degli errori,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 1 July 1960, 2.

<sup>11</sup> “L’associazione liberale italo-canadese in marcia” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 March, 1960, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 155.

<sup>13</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “Problemi del lavoro: esiste una vera protezione?,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 July 1959, 2.

With the vast majority of Italians employed in dangerous and low-paying jobs<sup>14</sup>, the collectivity's intellectuals became increasingly aware of the precarious status of its working-class. Italian-Canadians in construction, for instance, "were obliged to work from dawn to dusk for as little as fifty cents an hour". Due to the "few legal safeguards" protecting this over-worked proletariat<sup>15</sup>, Italian-Canadian elites justifiably turned to criticizing the Canadian government. Shortly after the death of two, of many<sup>16</sup>, Montreal Italians in work related accidents, Nicola Ciamarra editorialized, "The municipal, provincial, and federal authorities do not have the tools (or do not put them into practice) to protect the life of people with risky employment."<sup>17</sup> Far from the "fatherland", in search of a "better life", young immigrants were perishing in the workplace, due to the "coldness" of Canadian politicians, blind to the rising casualties.<sup>18</sup> Underlining an increasingly critical view of migration, Luigi Perciballi, a unionist, believed Italians in Canada to be "introduced to an irrational and competitive market, abandoned without assistance to compete with the local, better-prepared, workforce, protected against competition".<sup>19</sup> And, as Ciamarra asserted, "Immigrants are commodities, used only to pave roads and build bridges".<sup>20</sup> Yet the difficulties faced by the Italian proletariat, at least in the construction industry, were present regardless of the ethnic origin of the employer. In fact, a large number of immigrants in Montreal worked "for Italians, with

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<sup>14</sup> Painchaud and Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec...*, 95-100.

<sup>15</sup> Morton, *Working People...*, 239.

<sup>16</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, "Gli emigranti, queste povere vittime: sempre piu numerosi i 'martiri del lavoro'," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 October 1959, 2; "Un'altra vittima del lavoro: Salvatore Barbadoro perisce in un incidente," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 December 1959, 1; "Le vittime dei datori di lavoro sempre piu numerose: la buona fede dell'immigrante troppo sovente turlupinata," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 May 1960, 1; "Un'altra vittima del lavoro: il giovane Lorenzo Marandola," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 June 1964, 16; "Ancora vittime per la 'metropolitana': le autorita locali appiranno gli occhi?," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18-25 December 1965, 12; Argo, "Morte di frodo," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 January 1966, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, "Tristi ed amari per i nostril immigrati i "dividendi" del lavoro!: Due operai folgorati nei cantieri di 'Place Ville Marie'," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 July 1961, 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Luigi Perciballi, "Comunicato del comitato di difesa operaia," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 1 May 1969, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, "Gli emigranti, queste povere vittime: sempre piu numerosi i "martiri del lavoro," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 October 1959, 2.

Italians, and in Italian"<sup>21</sup>, but were still forced, for example, to work overtime without pay.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, whether employed by English-, French-, or Italian-Canadians, immigrants were kept purposely ignorant of their rights.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that Italians were severely under-represented in Quebec's unions.<sup>24</sup>

Employing similar socialization tactics developed in the 1950s, by the 1960s the journalists of *Il Cittadino Canadese* underscored the necessity of Italian-Canadian worker activism<sup>25</sup> in order to combat the "exploitation" of the immigrant working class.<sup>26</sup> Aware that "few Italian immigrants had more than a limited, or even fleeting, union or radical experience before immigrating to Canada"<sup>27</sup>, they used their publication as an educational tool, where there was, for instance, a regular column, entitled *La colonna del lavoro*. Outlining the basics of labour legislation and worker's compensation in Canada, here readers were able to write to the newspaper, asking questions and receiving published responses.<sup>28</sup> With the emphasis on participation and

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<sup>21</sup> Painchaud and Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec...*, 102.

<sup>22</sup> Minimo, "Inchiesta sulla comunita italiana: il fronte dello sfruttamento," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 October 1959, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Morton, *Working People...*, 240.

<sup>24</sup> Antonino Spada, "Liquidiamo il 'fenomeno' Gagliardi!: lettera aperta al 'nostro' Alfredo," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 October 1960, 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> Domenico Cristofaro, "La colonna del lavoro: fraterno appello ai sarti non organizzati in Montreal," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 March 1959, 2; Domenico Cristofaro, "La colonna del lavoro: si rinnova l'appello ai sarti non organizzati," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 March 1959, 4; Domenico Cristofaro, "La colonna del lavoro: riunione a Montreal dell'esecutivo ampliato della A. C. W. of A: Saranno presenti personalita del mondo sindacale americano e canadese, fra cui molde di origine italiana," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 July 1959, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Ermanno LaRiccia, "Alla scoperta della comunita italiana: solo con una comunita unita si potra evitare lo sfruttamento dei nostri connazionali," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 July 1960, 4; Ermanno LaRiccia, "Alla scoperta della comunita italiana: solo se i lavoratori italiani parteciperano alla vita sindacale si puo evitare lo sfruttamento," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 October 1960, 5; "L'unione di tutti i lavoratori e necessaria," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 February 1961, 7; "Un appello dell'ULIC: i lavoratori italiani devono partecipare piu attivamente alla vita sindacale," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 October 1961, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People...*, 155.

<sup>28</sup> "Rubrica del lavoratore: Assistenza pubblica," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 December 1958, 9; Domenico Cristofaro, "La colonna del lavoro," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 April 1959, 4; Charles Caccia, "Le legge sul 'Workmen's Compensation Board' protegge i lavoratori in caso d'incidence," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 17 June 1960, 4; "La Rubrica del lavoratore," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 January 1962, 7.

the defense of what were considered inherent rights<sup>29</sup>, the ideology promoted by the newspaper was by no means radical. As Ciamarra specified, “If by unionism ones means left-wing politics, Italians want nothing to do with it, but if by unionism one means a democratic organization created to defend work contracts and better working conditions then Italian are all for unions.”<sup>30</sup> Not only did journalists frame worker activism in moderate terms, but community leaders also appealed to the Italian sense of family duty. Unionization would ensure the material well-being of worker’s families<sup>31</sup>, which, due to a low minimum wage and dangerous working conditions, was constantly under threat.<sup>32</sup>

Related to the newspaper’s emphasis on the family economy, there was a noticeable shift in the usually male-centric rhetoric of *Il Cittadino Canadese*, where the community’s intellectuals included Italian women in their writings concerning progressive politics.<sup>33</sup> Playing a key role in the immigrant family, women’s wages compensated for the insufficient pay of their husbands and accelerated the process towards homeownership.<sup>34</sup> Similar to Italian men, Italian women worked “long-hours at either monotonous or hazardous jobs” with little to no unionization.<sup>35</sup> Yet as female labourers in the manufacturing and domestic service sectors, employers paid them even less than they did male workers.<sup>36</sup> Pointing to this particularly vulnerable position, an Italian-Canadian journalist remarked:

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<sup>29</sup> Mario Bucci, “Un appello dell’unione internazionale della costruzione ai lavoratori italiani di Montreal,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 January 1964, 2; Nicola Ciamarra, “Il sindacato e uno strumento di lotto: Gli italiani hanno le unioni che si meritono,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 March 1965, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, “A proposito dello sciopero di Toronto: integrazione italo-canadese in marcia,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 August 1960, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Iacovetta, *Such hardworking people...*, 155. Here, Iacovetta is referring to the construction workers strikes in Toronto, which also concerns the article in footnote 17. Nevertheless, the same tendency manifests in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, in general.

<sup>32</sup> “Nel mondo del lavoro: I lavoratori hanno paura,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 March 1967, 16; Cristofaro, Nicola. “Messaggio agli italiani,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1967, 7.

<sup>33</sup> “L’ULIC ha celebrato la Festa del lavoro,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 September 1962, 2; Nicola Ciamarra, “Il mio punto di vista: dimensione nuova,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 March 1967, 3; “I lavoratori italiani in Canada,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 June 1968, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Homeownership had been widely regarded by scholars as the primary goal of Italian immigrant families and a sign of success. See, for example, Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People...*, 93.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

A woman should be considered equal to a man, even after physiological differences are taken into consideration: her work is equally valuable and should be equally paid. The question of salaries should not be divided, for men or for women: in these times these questions should already be in the past, since today, in the atomic age, this type of discrimination is inconceivable.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, as evidenced by Sir John's article, although undoubtedly exploited, Italian immigrant women managed to achieve a measure of equality within the community as economic agents. Likewise, the newspaper encouraged Italian-Canadian women to assert themselves in the workplace, printing in its pages, for example, Italian-language advertisements for the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU)<sup>38</sup> and its Italian-specific "local". While a reflection of broader social changes in favour of women's equality<sup>39</sup>, in addition to within the Italian community, "local 438" was also indicative of the preferred organization of Italian workers<sup>40</sup>, in short, more or less along ethnic lines.

Reminiscent of the 1950s, Nicola Ciamarra evoked the advantages of Italian-Canadian unity, this time, in order to improve the masses' socio-economic position.<sup>41</sup> In line with the general tendency to promote common interests as a collectivity, the call to action reflected the *raison d'être* of Italian-Canadian workers' associations, namely the *Associazione Cristina dei lavoratori Italiani* (A.C.L.I.) and the *Unione dei lavoratori Italo-canadesi* (U.L.I.C.). Adhering to Catholic social doctrine<sup>42</sup>, A.C.L.I. sought to provide assistance to immigrant workers in Canada through Italian Churches<sup>43</sup>, while the

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<sup>37</sup> Sir John, "Nel mondo del lavoro: parità di diritto alle donne," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 April 1967, 9.

<sup>38</sup> "Attenzione: Membri dei Locali 205, 262, 439, 485 e 521: Unione Internazionale dei Lavoratori d'Abbigliamento Femminile," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 August 1966, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Rouillard, *Le syndicalisme québécois...*, 141.

<sup>40</sup> "Lo statuto alla 'locale 438'," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 11 March 1966, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ermanno LaRiccia, "Alla scoperta della comunità italiana: solo con una comunità unita si potrà evitare lo sfruttamento dei nostri connazionali," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 July 1960, 4; Ermanno LaRiccia, "Alla scoperta della comunità italiana: solo se i lavoratori italiani parteciperanno alla vita sindacale si può evitare lo sfruttamento," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 October 1960, 5; "L'unione di tutti i lavoratori è necessaria," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 February 1961, 7; "Un appello dell'ULIC: i lavoratori italiani devono partecipare più attivamente alla vita sindacale," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 October 1961, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Paichaud and Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec...*, 123.

<sup>43</sup> "Un'ultima iniziativa: conferenze d'orientamento per i lavoratori italiani al circolo A.C.L.I. 'B. Longo'," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 22 March 1963, 2; "Alla manifestazione del circolo A.C.L.I. Grande



more proactive U.L.I.C. acted primarily as an intermediary between the Italian community and Quebec's unions. The latter organization often held information sessions attended by leaders of the C.S.N or the F.T.Q, where Italian-Canadian activists capitalized on the opportunity to articulate their desire "to integrate into the Canadian workers' movement."<sup>44</sup> Citing indifference on the part of native-born activists<sup>45</sup>, U.L.I.C. accused Quebec unions of being unresponsive to immigrants' particular needs, especially with regards to linguistic deficiencies, and ignoring widespread prejudice directed towards ethnic minorities, such as the practice of "last to hired, first to get fired."<sup>46</sup> Since they wanted to fully participate, community elites demanded the establishment of Italian-specific sections.<sup>47</sup> Seemingly a contradiction in the eyes of the uniquely French-Canadian leadership, who, in one case, accused Italians of wanting to "balkanize" the province's unions, *Il Cittadino Canadese* and Italian-Canadian labour activists conversely maintained that Italian-Canadian suffered from outright "discrimination", rendering true class "unity" under the current structure impossible.<sup>48</sup> Struggling for equity, not equality, the newspaper and its allies successfully convinced the Louis Laberge of the F.T.Q to establish an Italian-only "local" within "local 62".<sup>49</sup>

As reflected by this campaign, Italian-Canadian worker activism was fought on two fronts; the first, on the ground and led by Italian-Canadian unionists and the second,

Successo per tutti: applause a tenori, baritone e cantanti di musica leggera," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 May 1963, 19; "Una porta aperta sull'avvenire economico dei giovani italiani," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 October 1963, 2.

<sup>44</sup> "Un'appello dell'U.L.I.C: I lavoratori italiani devono partecipare piu' attivamente alla vita sindacale," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 October 1961, 9; "Lettere al Direttore: una protesta dell'U.L.I.C.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 October 1961, 2; "U.L.I.C. celebra la Festa del lavoro," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 31 August 1962, 2; Giacomo Cicirello, "La settimana: I lavoratori italiani," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 October 1962; G. Indri, "Domenica 31 marzo alla Casa d'Italia: assemblea organizzata dall'ULIC per sottoporre ai partiti in lizza le esigenze dei lavoratori italiani," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 March 1963, 14.

<sup>45</sup> "A colloquio con Laporte e Perreault arrivismo al vertice?," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 July 1965, 8.

<sup>46</sup> "L'Unione di tutti i lavoratori e necessaria," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 February 1961, 7.

<sup>47</sup> "Alla scoperta della comunita italiana: solo con una comunita unita si potra evitare lo sfruttamento dei nostri connazionali," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 July 1960, 4.

<sup>48</sup> "Le discriminazioni ai danni dei lavoratori italiani dei dirigenti sindacali della 'Local 62': Reclamiamo una sezione italiana per gli operai della costruzione," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 July 1965, 4.

<sup>49</sup> "I positive risultati di una giusta campagna: Laberge: 'e' legittima la richiesta di una sezione italiana in seno alla Locale 62," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 August 1965, 10.

by means of the involved stance assumed by *Il Cittadino Canadese*. For instance, Domenico Cristofaro, a typical example of a community activist, used his youthful experience to inform and motivate his quest to ameliorate the “working and living conditions” of the lower-classes. Born in Montreal, he grew up in Campobasso, Italy, only to return to Canada at the age of sixteen to work in the factories. Saddened by the “exploitation” he witnessed, Cristofaro was “not left indifferent” and became involved in union activity under the auspices the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (The Amalgamated), a long-standing United States-based union, known for its progressive politics and predominately Italian and Jewish leadership.<sup>50</sup> Due to his efforts, the Montreal Italian section of the Amalgamated increased tenfold in just over ten years.<sup>51</sup> Most likely an explanation for this impressive improvement, Cristofaro and fellow unionist, Mario Bucci of the C.S.N, frequently relied upon the newspaper to mobilize their ethnic counterparts in the construction and garment industries, as authors of short articles that emphasized the importance of participation and publicized workers’ events in the community.<sup>52</sup> Not only allowing the publication to serve as a communication medium, Italian-Canadian journalists engaged in their own battles as well. For example, they convinced the C.S.N to launch an investigation into the “abuses” of its *Comité Conjoint*<sup>53</sup>, a body Italian construction workers accused of withholding their vacation pay.<sup>54</sup> Similar to the French-Canadian working-classes, then, Italian-

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<sup>50</sup> Earl Strong, *The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America*. Grinnel, Herald-Register Publishing Co., 1940, 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> Giosafat Mingarelli, *Gli italiani di Montreal: Note e Profili. Second Edition* (Montreal: Centro Italiano Attivita Commerciali-Artistiche, 1971), 235.

<sup>52</sup> Mario Bucci, “La vostra posta: la parola ad un sindacalista,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 Febbraio 1965, 2; Mario Bucci, “Una riunione alla quale bisogna intervenire,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 April 1965, 16; Mario Bucci, “Gli operai italiani ed il sindacalismo nel Quebec: ‘l’ora delle decisioni importanti!’,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 April 1965, 17; Bucci Mario, “Sulla scena sindacale: necessaria la partecipazione attiva di voi tutti!,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 April 1965, 17; Domenico Cristofaro, “Le buone feste,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 December 1966, 15; Nicola Cristofaro, “A tutti I lavoratori,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 December 1967, 5; Nicola Cristofaro, “Festa dei lavoratori,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 September 1969, 3.

<sup>53</sup> “D’accordo la C.S.N. ha disposto un’inchiesta: ma...a che gioco giochiamo Signor del Frate?,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 July 1965, 9.

<sup>54</sup> “La vostra posta: Anche I datori di lavoro protestano: qualcuno allunga le mani,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 June 1965, 2.

Canadians, as wholehearted supporters of the ideals of the Quiet Revolution<sup>55</sup>, were increasingly willing to be assertive in order to improve their standard of living.<sup>56</sup> Though the two groups' interests somewhat converged in the workforce, they quite drastically diverged in matters concerning language. An issue of enormous importance, because French, not Catholicism, increasingly defined Quebecois society; the Montreal Italian community's political activism was thereby directed to yet another front after the Saint-Léonard School Crisis.

## II. The Italian-Canadian Response to the Linguistic Crisis

While the movement originated at the "top of the Quebec hierarchy", by the mid-1960s, the "mood of change reflected in the Quiet Revolution reached the heart of French-Canadian society".<sup>57</sup> Since progressive reforms came one after another, the population was given the impression of "witnessing not only a radical change but even the dawn of a new era". Nevertheless, disappointment with the results eventually set in, due in part to the rising unemployment rate, as well as to the fact that "the francophone community did not significantly improve its socio-economic status relative to other groups."<sup>58</sup> With the French-speaking majority earning considerably less than the English-speaking minority, militants and intellectuals adopted an anti-colonial rhetoric as a means to articulate the idea of a French-Canadian "ethnic-class".<sup>59</sup> Motivating the "Quebec liberation movement", the dominance of English in all spheres was called into question, including the field of education.<sup>60</sup> High immigration rates, combined with a declining French-Canadian birth rate, definitely rendered the Italian-Canadians' choice of English-language education an explosive political issue. French schools, in general, failed to attract students from ethnic communities. Anglicized children of immigrants,

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<sup>55</sup> Luigi Salvi, "La rivoluzione tranquilla: non tutti avranno fatto caso a quello che effettivamente sta succedendo tuttavia la provincial sta subendo un profondo cambiamento d'insieme," *Il Cittadino Canades* 29 April 1966, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Rouillard, *Le syndicalisme québécois...*, 139.

<sup>57</sup> Morton, *Working People...*, 251.

<sup>58</sup> Ralph Peter Guntzel, "The Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), the Idea of Independence, and the Sovereignist Movement, 1960-1980," *Labour/Le Travail* 31 (Spring 1993), 159.

<sup>59</sup> Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Montreal, the Sixties, and the Forging of a Radical Imagination* (PhD: Queen's University, 2007), 58.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

especially those of Italian descent, coming from an enormous community by any standard, undeniably threatened the future of French in Montreal, Quebec and Canada. French-Canadians were thus justifiably anxious, as their economic and social standing in their home province, in particular, was only set to decrease. Yet, Italians, it must be specified, were as a group poorer than French-Canadians.<sup>61</sup> Aware of its own socio-economic situation, the collectivity desperately desired better for its children, and saw English-language education as their ticket to success. In fact, Italian children were sent to English schools because of their more welcoming attitude towards ethnic minorities, their reputation for a superior level of education, the freedom of movement they allowed their graduates and finally, because English was the indisputable language of work in Montreal.<sup>62</sup> As adamant supporters of bilingualism<sup>63</sup>, the parents' decision was, therefore, not a reflection of hostility towards French-Canadians or assimilation into the English-Canadian community.<sup>64</sup> The community's political activism in this regard, however, pitted it against French-Canadian neo-nationalists. The two groups had very different logics, though only the Italian one will be outlined here.

As evidenced by the intense preoccupation with their children's future and the numerous articles in *Il Cittadino Canadese* addressing Canadian issues, Italian-Canadians were in Canada to stay and fully aware of the political and social repercussions of any authorities' actions.<sup>65</sup> Hence, an aspect of the debate that truly

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<sup>61</sup> Kimon Valaskakis, "La Crise du bill 63 vue par un Néo-Québécois," *Le devoir*, 12 November 1969, 5. Cited in Mills, *The Empire Within...*, 315.

<sup>62</sup> Sir John, "Gli studenti italiani vanno tutti alla scuola inglese?," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 October 1967, 15; "Quebec: Inferno e paradise," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 September 1968, 18; "Il pensiero delle alter chiese protestanti: la lingua inglese e lingua di lavoro," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 October 1968, 20-21; "Un invito alla riflessione rivolto ai genitori di St. Leonard: il reddito dei franco-canadesi, a parità di istruzione, e inferiore," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 October 1968, 22-25.

<sup>63</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, "Non si puo' piu' rimandare," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 28 March 1968, 12.

<sup>64</sup> Paul-André Linteau, "The Italians in Quebec: Key Participants in Contemporary Linguistic and Political Debates" in Franc Sturino and Roberto Perin, eds., *Arrangiarsi: The Italian Immigrant Experience in Canada* (Montreal: Guernica Press, 1989), 190.

<sup>65</sup> "La politica provinciale: commissione d'inchiesta per la lingua francese," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 December 1968, 8; Sergio Lanzieri, "Vive le Québec libre!," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 14 April 1969: 3; Jean Marchand, "Il prezzo dell'unità," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 April 1969, 34; Gérard Filion, "I problemi del Quebec," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 June 1969, 31; Canadian Scene, "La scuola, l'immigrato e il bimbo il Canada," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 September 1969, 8; Canadian Scene. "Il bilinguismo in Canada: crisi nella Confederazione," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 October 1969, 30; Canadian Scene. "Paese bilingue," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 October 1969, 31.

offended the community was the tendency present in the public discourse to meld the terms Italian and immigrant.<sup>66</sup> For example, Mario Barone, a construction tycoon who had resided in Canada for seventeen years and was the father of four Canadian-born children, stated, "My case is like the case of thousands of other Canadians who are tired of being called Neo-Canadians."<sup>67</sup> This popular opinion was translated into an official position assumed by the Saint-Léonard Parents' Association, an organization founded in 1968 with the support of prominent Italian-Canadians, notably the Barone brothers.<sup>68</sup> Reflecting the views of its membership, Robert Beale, the group's Irish Catholic president, wrote in the Italian-language newspaper:

An immigrant ceases to be such once he has acquired Canadian citizenship, and is entitled to all the privileges, rights and obligations of a natural born Canadian. The term "Neo-Canadian" is just a smokescreen, as this term is being applied to Canadians who were born here, and even those whose grand-parents were born in Canada, but who do not have Anglo-Saxon or French sounding surnames.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, with over eighty percent of Saint-Léonard parents holding Canadian citizenship<sup>70</sup>, the community framed its argument using the terminology of rights, since after having been in Canada for at least ten years, Italian-Canadians believed they deserved the same freedom of choice as any other resident of Quebec, that is, freedom of choice in matters of education.<sup>71</sup> So strong were the community's beliefs, as well as fear of the next generation's failure that Italian-Canadians mobilized quickly in order to oppose the decision of the Saint-Léonard school board.

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<sup>66</sup> Donat Taddeo, "The Language Debate in Quebec and the Italian Community" in Basilio Giordano, *I protagonisti italiani di Montreal* (Montréal: Published by Basilio Giordano, 1998), 160.

<sup>67</sup> "St. Leonard: i discorsi ad Ottawa," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 September 1968, 14-16.

<sup>68</sup> Donat Taddeo and Raymond Taras. *Le débat linguistique au Québec* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1987), 93.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Beale, "St-Leonard: quello che dicono gli altri," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 September 1968, 15.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Ciamarra Nicola, "St-Leonard," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 June 1968, 16-17; Sergio Lanzieri, "Una questione di amicizia," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 June 1968, 3; Nicola Ciamarra, "St. Leonard: i cittadini ed i suoi diritti," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 July 1968, 5; "Tre domande a 'Roberto Billi' presidente dell'associazione dei genitori: lottero con tutte le forze fino a che i diritti delle minoranze non siano stati rispettati," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 September 1968, 14.

Once again promoting unity, the community elite encouraged Italian immigrants to take a stand.<sup>72</sup> Employing traditional methods developed in the 1950s, the community leadership initially turned towards the Canadian Italian Professional and Businessmen's Association (C.I.B.P.A.). Sharing the opinion of *Il Cittadino Canadese's* journalists<sup>73</sup>, the elitist organization "resolutely advocated a bilingual form of education", an approach that corresponded with Italian-Canadian "pragmatism" and understanding of the "two solitudes". In spite of its good intentions, the C.I.B.P.A, nevertheless, "did have difficulty in affirming itself as the preeminent spokesperson for the community." Firstly, the concept of bilingual schools failed, since both English- and French-Canadians considered them a threat and secondly, "the businessmen mentality did not necessarily ring resonantly enough for the emotionally charged demands being made by the Italian parents for their children in St-Léonard."<sup>74</sup> Even Sergio Lanzieri, an editorialist generally satisfied with the Association's role in the language debate, critiqued the economic elites' shortcomings, accusing them of "small talking" in Quebec City.<sup>75</sup> The general call to action, however, did not go unheeded. Very little convincing was needed; Italians enthusiastically protested on Parliament Hill and readily attended information sessions addressing the linguistic conflict.<sup>76</sup> Interestingly, normally apolitical Italian Catholic and Protestant priests became involved as well, most likely because Italians were converting to Protestantism in order to access English-language education<sup>77</sup>, making Montreal the city in North American with the highest percentage of Italian Protestants.<sup>78</sup> With the linguistic conflict, therefore, Italian-Canadian participation

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<sup>72</sup> Sergio Lanzieri, "L'unione fa la forza," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 August 1968, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Nicola Ciamarra, "Non si puo' piu' rimandare," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 28 March 1968, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Taddeo, "The Language Debate in Quebec...", 161.

<sup>75</sup> Sergio Lanzieri, "Processo al memoriale," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 May 1968, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Sergio Lanzieri, "Importante," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 March 1968, 13; "St. Leonard: i discorsi ad Ottawa," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 September 1968, 14-16.

<sup>77</sup> "A proposito della questione scolastica di St-Leonard," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 September 1968, 16; Sir John, "Al clero cattolico," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 September 1968, 18; "Il Sig. Madonia dichiara: 'quello di St-Leonard e un problema MORALE!'," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 September 1968, 16-17.

<sup>78</sup> "Diventeranno protestanti per difendere i loro diritti?," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 22 August 1968, 11-13.

definitely extended into the informal realm, with a greater percentage of the community developing a political consciousness, for better or for worse.

Due to the contentious nature of the issue and its centrality in the lives of both French and Italian-Canadians, extreme tension developed between the two groups living side by side in Saint-Léonard, culminating with a riot in 1968. Commencing with a deliberately aggressive protest in the Italian section of the suburb, the actions of the *Mouvement pour l'intégration scolaire* (M.I.S.), a neo-nationalist organization in favour of French-language education for ethnic minorities, resulted in thirty-nine people arrested, including nine Italians.<sup>79</sup> Encouraging calm, *Il Cittadino Canadese* instructed its readership to “say no to violence and provocation”<sup>80</sup> The English-language press also reacted and urged Jean-Jacques Bertrand, the leader of the *Union Nationale*, “to act”. Indeed, the government in power was very much pressured to intervene, not only because of disorder related to language, but also due to chaos in the workforce linked to illegal strikes.<sup>81</sup> Thus in an attempt to “repress the troubles, linguistic or otherwise”, the National Assembly passed Bill 63 in 1968. Although the law’s official purpose was “to promote the French language in Quebec”, it in fact guaranteed freedom of choice in matters of education, generally appeasing Italian-speakers, satisfying English-speakers, while maddening French-speakers.<sup>82</sup> In October 1969, an estimated thirty thousand francophones protested throughout the province<sup>83</sup> and strikes erupted in the universities and colleges.<sup>84</sup> Even the F.T.Q. and the C.S.N. publicly expressed their opposition to Bill 63 and joined the demonstrations.<sup>85</sup> Significantly, however, the stance assumed by

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<sup>79</sup> Paichaud and Poulin, *Les italiens du Québec...*, 156.

<sup>80</sup> “Dite no alla violenza, dite no alle provocazioni,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 September 1969, 1.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Jones, “Politics and the Reinforcement of the French Language in Canada and Quebec, 1960-1986” in Michael Behiels, ed., *Quebec Since 1945: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 229.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Lise LaChance and Benoit Lavoie, “À Montreal 30,000 manifestants”. *Le Soleil*, 30 October 1969 in *Les réactions au projet de loi 63: revue de presse* (Québec: Office de l’information et de publicité, 1969).

<sup>84</sup> Jones, “Politics and the Reinforcement of the French Language...,” 230.

<sup>85</sup> Laval Le Borgne, “Le bill sème la pagaille a la CSN et récolte l’indifférence des cols bleus,” *La Presse*, 29 October 1969; Michel Rioux, “La FTQ se donne une politique linguistique,” *L’Action*, 24

the predominately French-Canadian unions directly contradicted the position of the overwhelmingly immigrant Amalgamated and its affiliates, organizations that supported parents' right to free choice.<sup>86</sup>

Professor Robert Boily, when interviewed by *La Presse* concerning Bill 63, stated:

Depuis toujours, on a fait porter sur le dos des immigrants le choix de la langue... Or, ce n'est pas aux immigrants à régler ce problème. C'est à nous. On ne peut pas demander aux immigrants de choisir un moyen plus difficile de gagner sa vie, c'est à nous de leur faciliter le moyen de gagner leur vie dans notre propre contexte.<sup>87</sup>

Evidently this belief was shared by Italian-Canadians and constantly reiterated by means of the newly established *Fédération des associations italiennes du Québec* (F.A.I.Q.), an umbrella organization founded in 1972 in order to articulate the collectivity's unique political perspective.<sup>88</sup> Shortly thereafter, the F.A.I.Q. issued a well-publicized statement<sup>89</sup> where the leadership recognized the right of the government to mandate immigrant children to attend French-language schools. Though the organization affirmed the importance of "integration" into a francophone Quebec, bilingualism was viewed as a necessity and, as a result, the F.A.I.Q. also maintained that "it was the obligation of Quebecois society and the government of Quebec to provide immigrants with an education system such that they could easily integrate into the workplace and ensure their livelihood."<sup>90</sup> Unifying the major Italian-Canadian institutions, including the multi-ethnic Amalgamated<sup>91</sup>, the organization was the self-proclaimed official spokesman of the community at all levels of government, even in

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November 1969; Raymond Bernatchez, "A la recherche d'une 'prudence linguistique': La FTQ s'oppose au Bill 63," 24 November, 1969 in *Les réactions au projet de loi 63: revue de presse* (Québec: Office de l'information et de publicité, 1969).

<sup>86</sup> "Comunicato dell'A.C.W.A.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 September 1968, 19.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Boily, "Ce n'est pas aux immigrants à régler les problèmes linguistiques du Québec," *La Presse*, 29 October 1969 in *Les réactions au projet de loi 63: revue de presse* (Québec: Office de l'information et de publicité, 1969).

<sup>88</sup> Taddeo and Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec...*, 142.

<sup>89</sup> "Le opinioni degli altri," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 March 1973, 17.

<sup>90</sup> "Il documento della Federazione diramato alla stampa: la F.A.I.Q., il rapporto Gendron ed i terzi gruppi etnici," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 29 March 1973, 16.

<sup>91</sup> "Attività sociali: Significativi consensi alla F.A.I.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 July 1972, 9.



Rome, and addressed issues other than the linguistic, notably labour.<sup>92</sup> With the enactment of Bill 22 in July 1974<sup>93</sup>, its visibility only increased as did the internal divisions within the community it claimed to represent, in spite of its motto of “unity and participation”.<sup>94</sup>

As evidenced by the official position of the F.A.I.Q., its leadership had sensed the “winds of change” and the necessity for the Italian community to adapt to them. Yet, “as a result of disagreement over how rigidly the status quo should be defended”, a group of educational professionals left the umbrella organization to establish the *Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese*. Unlike the F.A.I.Q., whose primary support came from institutions such as the C.I.B.P.A, the *Consiglio* was backed by “the very families affected by the crisis”.<sup>95</sup> With a grassroots approach, the latter gained prominence within the community by setting up English classes in Italian Church basements in order to help the collectivity’s children pass the mandatory test stipulated by Bill 22.<sup>96</sup> Introduced by Robert Bourassa in 1974, this law proclaimed French the official language of Quebec, while limiting English-language schooling to children able to pass an examination. Satisfying neither English- nor French-speakers, francophones, in particular, “loathed the spectacle of weeping children being tested, and being sent the message that those that passed entered the pearly gates of English school and those that failed were doomed to hell of French school.”<sup>97</sup> As for the *Consiglio*’s approach, though provoking the ire of the French-speaking majority, the group, nevertheless, perceived its actions as within the bounds of legal democratic action. The organization took it upon itself to teach young

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<sup>92</sup> “Montreal giorno e notte: Gli scopi della F.A.I.,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 October 1972, 10; “Promemoria della F.A.I. alle autorità di governo: La Federazione e la questione linguistica nel Quebec,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 January 1973, 1; “Rapporto della F.A.I.Q. sul viaggio in Italia della delegazione,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 14 February 1974, 12-13; “Notiziario F.A.I.Q.: Congresso di Ottawa: partecipanti e programma,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 February 1974, 17; “Notiziario della F.A.I.Q.,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 June 1974, 19.

<sup>93</sup> Taddeo and Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec...*, 147.

<sup>94</sup> “‘Unita e partecipazione’ e il tema del prossimo ‘Congresso della F.A.I.’,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 February 1973, 15.

<sup>95</sup> Taddeo, *I protagonisti italiani di Montreal...*, 161.

<sup>96</sup> Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese, “Appuntamento settimanale: La pubblica istruzione: A cura del Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 January 1975, 2.

<sup>97</sup> Graham Fraser, *Sorry I Don't Speak French: Confronting the Canadian Crisis That Won't Go Away*. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 2006, 137.

Italian-Canadians the language, because even amongst those who were born in Canada, many were still unilingual Italian-speakers. In the eyes of the teachers and priests behind the initiative, there was nothing wrong or illegal with this tactic, it was, instead, yet another case of Italian-Canadian self-sufficiency.<sup>98</sup> Involving the parents in the process, demanding that they attend all classes, the association, significantly, served as an important socialization tool, not only explaining and aiding families during the current crisis<sup>99</sup>, but also providing information with regards to general issues related to education.<sup>100</sup> Most importantly, however, the *Consiglio* provided a means to go against the so-called “self-interested” Italian economic and political elite, often one and the same.<sup>101</sup>

Although on the opposite end of the spectrum, the *Movimento progressista italo-quebecchese* (M.P.I.Q.) evoked a similar grievance, accusing the official community leaders of taking action only when “they can benefit.”<sup>102</sup> A socialist workers’ organization founded shortly after the Saint-Léonard School Crisis by students, intellectuals, and workers<sup>103</sup>, the M.P.I.Q. adopted a familiar anti-colonial rhetoric<sup>104</sup>, proclaiming Quebec to be “under the domination of American imperialists and English-Canadian colonialists”. According to the *Movimento*, the Italian-Canadian working-class struggle and that of the people of Quebec should be considered “one and the same”.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese, “Appuntamento settimanale: Le cosiddette scuole ‘segrete’, ‘clandestine’ o ‘parallele’: cosa sono!,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 February 1975, 2 and 8.

<sup>99</sup> Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese, “Appuntamento settimanale: Che fare per le iscrizioni scolastiche nel febbraio ’75?!” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 February 1975, 2-3; Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese, “Appuntamento settimanale: le cosiddette scuole ‘segrete’, ‘clandestine’ o ‘parallele’: cosa sono?!...,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 February 1975, 2; Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese “Appuntamento settimanale: Iscrizione 75-76,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 February 1975, 2.

<sup>100</sup> Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese, “Lo psicologo interviene: vostro figlio deve cambiare scuola,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 March 1975, 2; Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese, “Si manifestano ancora dopo due anni di successo continuo: Certi problemi di apprendimento scolastico,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 April 1975, 2; Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese, “Appuntamento settimanale: Cosa significa: ristrutturazione?,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 April 1975, 2.

<sup>101</sup> Taddeo and Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec...*, 149.

<sup>102</sup> Tony di Ciocco, “Italian Socialists in Quebec : MPIQ,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 May 1972, 20.

<sup>103</sup> Paichaud and Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec...*, 129.

<sup>104</sup> Mills, *The Empire Within...*, 58.

<sup>105</sup> *Il Lavoratore: Organo del movimento progressista italo-quebecchese* 1, no.1 (May 1970), 1-3.

However, as outlined in *Il Lavoratore*, the association's propaganda organ, this line of thinking was impeded either by Italian leaders, who encouraged their poorer counterparts to maintain the "social peace"<sup>106</sup>, or French and English-Canadian elites, who used scare tactics in order to portray the demographic strength of Italian immigrants as a threat to French language and culture, and therefore pit francophones against their fellow workers.<sup>107</sup> As applied to the linguistic debate, the authors asserted that the "racist attacks" against the Italians of Saint-Léonard, inspired by the actions of Robert Beale and Raymond Lemieux, were "greatly appreciated by their bosses", since they divided Italian and French-Canadian "class brothers" into two opposing ethnic groups.<sup>108</sup> As a solution to the province's problems, the group sought the "liberation of Quebec for the realization of a socialist society", similar to the C.S.N.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the leadership believed that "once you have eliminated the major contradiction, that is, an English controlled economy, then the question of language becomes obsolete."<sup>110</sup> In short, as evidenced by the M.P.I.Q. and the *Consiglio*, the linguistic debate unleashed a variety of strong, diverging forces within the community. Faced with considerable uncertainty, however, many Italian-Canadians, as one can discern from the letters printed in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, viewed it in their best interest to close rank and adhere to the F.A.I.Q.<sup>111</sup>, because though there was disaccord, the community as a whole agreed that the struggle surrounding language should be fought "by Italians, for Italians" and the umbrella organization proved to be the most effective political option.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; *Il Lavoratore: Organo del movimento progressista italo-quebecchese* 2, no.11 (Decembre 1971), 2.

<sup>107</sup> *Il Lavoratore: Organo del movimento progressista italo-quebecchese* 2, no.1 (January 1971), 2.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Tony di Ciocco, "Italian Socialists in Quebec : MPIQ," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 May 1972, 20.

<sup>110</sup> Louis Le Borgne, *La CSN et la question nationale, depuis 1960* (Montréal: Les Éditions Albert St. Martin, 1976), 107.

<sup>111</sup> Letter "Attività sociali: significativi consensi alla F.A.I.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 July, 1972: 9; Letter "Lettere al Direttore: votiamo per gli italiani," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 Ottobre, 1972: 2; Letter "Lettere al Direttore," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 November, 1972: 2; Letter "Lettere al Direttore: aderiamo alla F.A.I.Q.!", *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 December, 1974: 2.

<sup>112</sup> Taddeo and Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec.....*, 164.

Yet, the de-facto tendency to present a united front was called into question by at least one young Italian-Canadian- the current playwright, Marco Micone. An avid, and public, supporter of language legislation throughout the 1970s, Micone immigrated to Montreal from Italy in 1958 at the age of thirteen. Refused from the French-language school in his neighbourhood, he enrolled in an English Catholic institution in East Montreal, attended overwhelmingly by other Italian immigrants. There, Micone felt a “double marginalization”, never truly mastering English nor integrating into an Anglo-Saxon milieu. He was also isolated from his French-speaking neighbours.<sup>113</sup> This distance was to disappear, however, after he read Gabrielle Roy’s *Bonheur d’occasion*, a haunting, Great Depression-era, portrait of a Montreal working-class francophone neighbourhood. Ending his alienation from his adopted society, Micone finally realized that there were non-Italians who “shared his deepest concerns”.<sup>114</sup> And, as he testified later on, the reason why he felt English remained so foreign to him during his youth was because it was spoken by people who did not share his “social class.”<sup>115</sup> Like the *Movimento progressista italo-quebecchese*, then, Micone emphasized the socio-economic similarities between French- and Italian-Canadians. It was the artist’s belief in the necessity of a francophone Quebec that led him to speak out publicly in favour of language laws after the enactment of Bill 22, explaining to French-Canadians what was, in his opinion, the bias present in the Italian-language media, and further propagated by the mainstream community’s leaders. Provoking an outrage, Micone was, in fact, so intimidated and threatened by the very Italian-Canadians he criticized, that he was forced to isolate himself in the countryside for a few weeks in order to escape the hostility.<sup>116</sup> Though a definite minority, Marco Micone’s activism was, nevertheless, an example of the political divergences within the Italian community, as well as the difficulties endured by an individual who dares to oppose the concept of group loyalty.

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<sup>113</sup> Caccia, Fulvio. *Sous le signe du phénix : entretiens avec quinze créateurs italo-québécois* (Montréal: Les éditions Guernica, 1985), 261-262.

<sup>114</sup> *Artisans de notre histoire: Marco Micone*. Dir. Pierre Lacombe. Montréal: Ciné Fête, 2002.

<sup>115</sup> Caccia, *Sous le signe du phénix...*, 267.

<sup>116</sup> *Artisans de notre histoire: Marco Micone*. Dir. Pierre Lacombe. Montréal: Ciné Fête, 2002.

### III. The Italian-Canadian Quiet Revolution

Marking a new era in provincial politics, the *Parti Québécois* (P.Q.) was elected to power in 1976, led by the charismatic René Lévesque. And, in part, due to the loss of Anglophone and Allophone support suffered by the *Parti Libéral du Québec* (P.L.C.) after the *Union Nationale* (U.N.) promised to restore freedom of choice in matters of education. With language touted as the party's "fundamental value", and a strong, left-of-centre belief in "interventionist policies", it was only logical that the P.Q. enacted Bill 101 in 1977. While reactions on the part of English-speakers were "uniformly negative"<sup>117</sup>, the majority of French-speakers supported the law, especially as it mandated the children of immigrants to attend French schools and made French the official language of work in the province<sup>118</sup>, two missing aspects of Bill 22 that the C.S.N., for example, vehemently denounced in 1974.<sup>119</sup> However, the response on the part of the Italian collectivity was quite critical. For instance, when journalists and members of the community expressed their viewpoints in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, they condemned the "coercive" aspects of the law and instead, as Michele Pirone did, called on French-speakers to "entice" minorities to speak their language, whether realistic or not.<sup>120</sup> Donat Taddeo, a commissioner with the Montreal Catholic Commission since 1973, and medical doctor Nicolas Panaccio, both underscored the importance of bilingualism and biculturalism, as necessary for integration, an open-mind and a successful career.<sup>121</sup> This belief was mirrored by the *Congresso Nazionale degli Italo-Canadese* (C.N.I.C.), a Montreal-based, pan-Canadian umbrella organization founded in 1974. The *Congresso* essentially reiterated the official community's stance assumed since the beginning of the language debate. In other words, the organization recognized the primacy of French, but, nonetheless, stressed economic considerations and the inherent right of citizens of Italian descent, as long-standing Canadians, to English-

<sup>117</sup> Jones, "Politics and the Reinforcement of the French Language....," 230-231.

<sup>118</sup> Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*..., 324.

<sup>119</sup> Confédération des syndicats nationaux, *Le bill 22: position de la CSN* (Montréal: Confédération des syndicats nationaux, 1974).

<sup>120</sup> Michele Pirone, "Un libro bianco per i quebecchesi," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 April 1977, 9-10; Roberto Ariano, "Taddeo Seeks Language Rights for Italians," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 May 1977, 24.

<sup>121</sup> Roberto Ariano, "A Doctor's Comments on Bill 1," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 June 1977, 26.

language education.<sup>122</sup> Thus, in spite of widespread disapproval on the part of minority groups, the *Parti Québécois* upheld the law, rendering Bill 101 a fact that others were obliged to adapt to, as well as a key component and expression of the post-Quiet Revolution Franco-Québécois identity.<sup>123</sup>

Indeed, the 1960s and 1970s produced numerous economic, political, and social changes which greatly transformed the perception that the French-speaking majority had of itself and of its society. More than, perhaps, any other aspect, Bill 101 was constructed as the cornerstone of the modern Québécois identity and effectively determined the boundaries of nationhood, de facto including the minorities in the majority's midst, while also signalling the end of French Canada. Yet, the enactment of the law was achieved after more than a decade of political tension, not only solidifying and renewing the Quebec French-Canadian identity, but the Italian-Canadian identity as well.<sup>124</sup> Though the debate over language of instruction was "never conceived as a battle against immigrants" and Raymond Lemieux himself specified, "Our real adversaries are certainly not Italians, but, in general, Montreal Anglophones"<sup>125</sup>, the Italian-Canadian community, nevertheless, felt that the linguistic question was unfairly "Italianized"<sup>126</sup>. Especially, when considering the high percentage of French-Canadians in English schools, a choice that only Neo-Canadians, in the opinion of Umberto Sgherri, an *Il Cittadino Canadese* journalist, got "crucified for".<sup>127</sup> Moreover, "neither the francophone nor anglophone communities were particularly eager to accommodate immigrant communities" throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which, according to the historian Michael Behiels, "contributed in no small measure to the linguistic and cultural crisis of

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<sup>122</sup> "Studio sul progetto di legge numero 1: riassunto e raccomandazioni," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 June 1977, 1 and 3.

<sup>123</sup> Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec...*, 324.

<sup>124</sup> In the words of sociologist Jack Jedwab, "Both Quebec's francophone majority and the province's linguistic and ethnocultural minorities tend in their respective ways to reinforce each other's group identification in the province." See Jack Jedwab, "Quebec Jews: A Unique Community in a Distinct Society," in Pierre Anctil, Gérard Bouchard, and Ira Robinson, eds., *Juifs et Canadiens français et la société québécoise* (Québec: Septentrion, 2000), 67.

<sup>125</sup> Mills, *The Empire Within...*, 313-314.

<sup>126</sup> "Pourquoi nous seulement?," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 September 1969, 26.

<sup>127</sup> Umberto Sgherri, « Dai giorni' caldi di St-Leonard ad oggi: i francofoni nelle scuole inglesi superanno le 25, 000 unita' », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 December 1973, 18.

the 1970s and 1980s".<sup>128</sup> Significantly, this historical reality<sup>129</sup>, combined with contradictions in contemporary attitudes, was not lost on Italian-Canadians.<sup>130</sup> Even in 1975, after many children of Italian immigrants were mandated to attend French schools, in the eyes of the *Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese*, "The reaction on the part of French-Canadians to the presence of children of immigrants in their schools was far from being positive and enthusiastic."<sup>131</sup> The Italian-Canadian identity was, therefore, reinforced during the Quiet Revolution<sup>132</sup>, due, in part, to a greater feeling of threat and perception of discrimination than in previous years.

In fact, the Saint-Léonard School Crisis was described as "collective shock treatment" by the editorial board of *Il Cittadino Canadese* and, as a result, prompted the community to re-evaluate its place in Quebecois society.<sup>133</sup> For Sergio Lanzieri, an editorialist, the collectivity's so-called "multi-lateral" approach to integration ultimately punished Italian-Canadians. Underlining the conflicting narratives, where native-born Canadians felt the onus was on immigrants to assimilate, versus New Canadians who often marginalized, Lanzieri editorialized:

Our fault, if one is to call it fault, is to have not formed a ghetto, like other ethnic and religious groups over the course of the past decades. In our futile attempt at integration, we have managed to integrate a little bit

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<sup>128</sup> Michael Behiels, *Quebec and the Question of Immigration: From Ethnocentrism to Ethno Pluralism, 1900-1985* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Society, 1991), 5.

<sup>129</sup> For example, while most ethnic minorities chose English-language instruction, a minority was nevertheless refused from French-language schools. Although this was not an official policy of the *Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal*, on occasion, exclusion occurred. See Miguel Simao Andrade, "La Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal et l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités ethniques à l'école française de 1947 à 1977," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 60, no.4 (Spring 2007), 476.

<sup>130</sup> « Pourquoi nous seulement ? », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 18 September 1969, 26; Sergio Lanzieri, « Ancora una battaglia? », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 31 October 1969, 3; « Fino a quando i genitori italiani di St. Leonard lo permetteranno? », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 28 August 1969, 3; « La città dell'odio : Saint-Léonard », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 February 1970, 2-4; « Dal libro 'Québec-Immigration : Zero' : la discriminazione nel Québec, più pronunciata contro gli italiani », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 October 1971, 1; Minimo. « E sempre la colpa degli italiani », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 March 1972, 10; « L'ostilità verso gli immigrati », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 December 1974, 80.

<sup>131</sup> Il Consiglio Educativo Italo-Canadese, « Appuntamento settimanale: i centri d'accueils », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 March 1975, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Paul-André Linteau, "The Italians in Quebec: Key Participants in Contemporary Linguistic and Political Debates" in Franc Sturino and Roberto Perin E, eds., *Arrangiarsi: The Italian Immigrant Experience in Canada* (Montreal: Guernica Press, 1989), 202.

<sup>133</sup> La direzione, "Capitolo chiuso a St. Leonard," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 September 1970, 3.

here and a little bit there, but we have, in the political sense, dispersed our forces.<sup>134</sup>

Partially defensive, as the above statement indicates, the post-Quiet Revolution Italian-Canadian identity was, however, also offensive. Angelo Montini, for instance, not only pointed to the double exclusion suffered by immigrants in Quebec, leading to, for example, residential segregation, but, most importantly, further highlighted the existence of a “third solitude”. Understood in positive terms by the journalist, and therefore not entirely the product of ghettoization, the concept was very much reflective of the manner in which Italian-Canadians perceived themselves and their role in Quebecois society.<sup>135</sup> According to one study, Italian-Canadians identified as being “simply Canadian” and never French-Canadian or Anglo-Saxon.<sup>136</sup> They also wanted to serve as mediators between the two opposing majority groups<sup>137</sup>, a position the community’s intellectual elites previously evoked in the 1950s. Thus, whether because they felt targeted or because it was actively asserted, Italian-Canadians possessed a strong sense of Italianess, a sentiment reinforced by their experiences in the 1960s, as well as their daily interactions with English- and French-Canadians-which were often at arm’s length.<sup>138</sup>

Though there was evidence of intercultural relations between the various linguistic and ethnic entities in Montreal during the 1960s and 1970s<sup>139</sup>, scholars have generally pointed to the “social distance” between them, which, in the opinion of sociologist Jack Jedwab, led to “greater institutional self-support on the part of certain

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<sup>134</sup> Sergio Lanzieri, “Gli italiani e il partito liberal,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 March 1970, 2-3.

<sup>135</sup> Angelo Montini, “Verso una comprensione piu realistica del processo integrativo degli immigrati,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 February 1977, 9-10.

<sup>136</sup> “Un estratto del ‘Toronto Telegram’: gli italiani di Quebec: mamma mia!,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 April 1970, 5.

<sup>137</sup> Claudio Antonelli, “La crisi canadese: l’incomunicabilita tra francofoni e anglofoni,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 May 1977, 1 and 4.

<sup>138</sup> Annick Germain and Damaris Rose describe Montreal social relations as a “peaceful, but distant co-existence”: *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2000), 246.

<sup>139</sup> Jean-Claude Sézanne, “A propos de lamentations indécentes des néo-canadiens,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 March 1969, 16-17; “L’Accord: punto d’incontro tra immigrati e canadesi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 December 1974, 8.



groups".<sup>140</sup> Originally based in Montreal, the Canadian Jewish Congress, for example, has served as an indication of the strong Canadian Jewish collective identity, a product, historians argue, of the "long-standing French-English duality", "a policy of multiculturalism", and a "greater feeling of threat emanating from the non-Jewish variety".<sup>141</sup> It was by no means a coincidence, then, that the National Congress of Italian-Canadians was also founded in Quebec's metropolis in the midst of the school crisis, indeed, in an attempt to emulate the institutional completeness of other communities, notably Jewish.<sup>142</sup> An idea twelve years in the making<sup>143</sup>, the unification of the major Italian-Canadian organizations of Montreal was heralded as an "historic occasion" and an enormous achievement after years of "humiliation, discrimination and racism".<sup>144</sup> Much more than a defensive reflex, however, the *Congresso* aimed to improve the standing of all Italian-Canadians, regardless of whether they were workers, professionals, business owners, students or children. While working towards a "better future" and in the "common good"<sup>145</sup>, the C.N.I.C also served an explicitly political purpose: the umbrella organization adopted the identical stance assumed by the F.A.I.Q. with regards to educational matters and claimed to represent the community at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels.<sup>146</sup>

Due to the institution's relative clout, the foundation of the *Congresso Nazionale degli Italo-Canadesi* has generally been considered the collectivity's most significant internal transformation since its inception.<sup>147</sup> Because certain individuals stood to

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<sup>140</sup> Jack Jedwab, "Quebec Jews: A Unique Community in a Distinct Society...", 55.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>142</sup> "Inizia la campagna per la sottoscrizione dei fondi: tutti uniti per una causa comune," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 March 1975, 14.

<sup>143</sup> "Attività sociali: Dopo 12 anni di esitazioni: la F.A.I. e una realtà," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 June 1972, 8.

<sup>144</sup> "Il primo 'congresso' degli italiani in Canada: un'occasione storica," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 28 February 1974, 1.

<sup>145</sup> "Il Congresso e simbolo dell'unità," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 23 June 1977, 16.

<sup>146</sup> "Il 21 marzo avro' un nuovo Consiglio di amministrazione: il Congresso degli Italo-Canadese Regione-Quebec," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 17 March 1977, 3.

<sup>147</sup> Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin, "Italianité, conflit linguistique et structure de pouvoir dans la communauté italo-québécoise," *Sociologie et Sociétés* 24, no.2 (1983), 90; Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin. *Les Italiens au Québec* (Hull: Les éditions Asticou/Les éditions Critiques, 1988), 97.

directly benefit from the unification of the collectivity's institutions, many scholars have pointed to the self-interested nature of the entrepreneurial elite.<sup>148</sup> For instance, the F.A.I.Q.'s first president, Pietro Rizzuto, a construction tycoon, was honoured as the first Canadian of Italian immigrant origin to be appointed to the Canadian Senate in 1976<sup>149</sup>, an event celebrated by the C.N.I.C., the Italian consulate, the mayor of Montreal, Jean Drapeau, the provincial Premier, René Levesque, and the Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Elliot Trudeau.<sup>150</sup> As a recipient of many awards highlighting his contribution to broader Canadian society<sup>151</sup>, the success of Rizzuto, as well as the *Congresso*, must also be understood, however, within the context of the recently enacted policy of multiculturalism.<sup>152</sup> As Claudio Antonelli wrote in *Il Cittadino Canadese*:

In the long march towards the emancipation of ethnic minorities in North America...each collectivity was gradually made aware of its own limitations and its own abilities...The activities of the National Congress of Italian-Canadians and the recent appointment of Pietro Rizzuto is a confirmation of this 'renewal'.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Basilio Giordano, *I protagonisti italiani di Montreal* (Montréal: Published by Basilio Giordano, 1998), 242.

<sup>150</sup> "Il banchetto al 'Queen Elizabeth' in onore del sen. Pietro Rizzuto," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 February 1977, 6.

<sup>151</sup> "'Uomo del mese' della rivista commerce: Pietro Rizzuto presidente Inter State Paving Inc.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 2 May 1974, 10; "Il 3 banchetto dei 'Cittadino del Mondo': Pietro Rizzuto nominato 'personalita dell'anno,'" *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 September 1974, 8; "Pietro Rizzuto nominato 'personalita dell'anno': grande successo d'una manifestazione sociale italo-quebecchese," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 17 October 1974, 19. "Dall'Assessorato Turismo e Spettacolo della Regione-Lazio: Pietro Rizzuto riceve il premio 'Eur 1975,'" *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 June 1975, 28; "Pietro Rizzuto nominato 'cittadino benemerito' di Laval" *Il Cittadino Candese* 17 April, 1975, 29.

<sup>152</sup> Italians in Canada were also affected, as Claudio Antonelli's citation will indicate, by the "ethnic revivalism" taking place in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. As Matthew Frye Jacobson explains, "The emergence of Black Nationalism and the emergence of multiculturalism had provided a new language for an identity that was not simply 'American.' After decades of striving to conform to the Anglo-Saxon standard, descendents of earlier European immigrants quit the melting pot. Italianness, Jewishness, Greekness, and Irishness had become badges of pride, not shame." See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>153</sup> Claudio Antonelli, "Miti e realta: l'immigrante italiano, questo sconosciuto," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 January 1977, 1.

Having undergone a Quiet Revolution of their own, therefore, Italian-Canadian elites conceived the *Congresso* as a pragmatic<sup>154</sup> and, evidently, assertive solution to the problems, linguistic or otherwise, plaguing the community.<sup>155</sup> Moreover, by embracing a so-called multicultural conception of integration<sup>156</sup>, the community leadership relied upon the umbrella organization to “integrate new arrivals into the local context” and allow them to “fully participate in the economic, social, and political life of their adoptive country.”<sup>157</sup> Thus, to accuse Italian-Canadian businessmen and politicians of acting strictly in their own interests, especially considering the emphasis placed on participation within the *Congresso*<sup>158</sup>, the extent of challenges Italian immigrants faced, in addition to a political culture, over three decades in the making, which put the collectivity before the individual, would, in short, be an over-simplification.

The “consciousness-raising” of the 1960s, which produced an increased assertiveness on the part of Italian immigrants, even extended into the workplace.<sup>159</sup> The McGill Strikes of 1973, especially, united workers of various backgrounds and were interpreted by *Il Cittadino Canadese*, at least, as an “immigrant uprising.” As the author of one article proclaimed:

One thing is clear: that the immigrants of today are no longer willing, like those of yesterday, to make superhuman sacrifices in order to succeed. That they are willing to make sacrifices yes, but, at the same time, they will exercise their rights.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Raymond Breton, *The Governance of Ethnic Communities: Political Structure and Processes in Canada* (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1991), 5-9.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> “Inaugurato il centro dei servizi comunitari,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 November 1975, 1.

<sup>157</sup> “Inizia la campagna per la sottoscrizione dei fondi: tutti uniti per una causa comune,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 March 1975, 14.

<sup>158</sup> “Notizie FAIQ: Assemblea popolare,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 January 1975, 13; “Notizie FAIQ: Domenica 9 febbraio, al ‘Buffet Roma’: assemblea per l’elezione dei rappresentanti della popolazione,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 February 1975, 13; “Notizie FAIQ: federazione degli Italo-Canadesi – Regione Quebec: eletti i rappresentanti della popolazione,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 February 1975, 12; “Notizie FAIQ: la Federazione degli Italo-Canadesi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 20 February 1975, 25; “Fondazione NCIC: inaugurato il Centro Comunitario: la fase sociale,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 November 1975, 8.

<sup>159</sup> Garfoli, Carlo. “La crisi del ’60 e i servizi comunitari,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 31 March, 1977: 16.

<sup>160</sup> “In margine allo sciopero dell’Universita McGill: Gli immigrati si svegliano!,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 13 December 1973, 44.

In line with the intellectual climate of the times, many other work-related changes also came into being, whether due to factors internal or external to the Montreal community. In the first place, the National Congress of Italian-Canadians assumed the responsibility of aiding Italian immigrants in surmounting economic barriers, still, unfortunately, in place.<sup>161</sup> With the help of the multi-ethnic Amalgamated and Domenico Cristofaro, the *Congresso* embarked on a fundraising campaign, entitled “for us, by us”, whose results assisted the community in its various economic, social and cultural endeavours.<sup>162</sup> Another worker’s association, though not associated with the umbrella organization, was founded in Rome in 1967 and then in Montreal in 1972.<sup>163</sup> Growing out of the now-defunct M.P.I.Q., as well as Italy’s move towards increasing its ties with the Italian Diaspora, the *Federazione italiana lavoratori emigrati e famiglie* (F.I.L.E.F) promoted the cultural assertion of Italian emigrants abroad, international worker solidarity, links with local labour movements, as well as the harmonious integration of Italy’s former citizens into their new societies.<sup>164</sup> Like the *Congresso*, the Montreal branch of the internationalist F.I.L.E.F. was involved on the Quebec political scene. Though, contrary to the umbrella organization, it was fully supportive of Bill 101 and considerably more sympathetic to Quebec’s constitutional demands.<sup>165</sup> Seemingly embracing the two political tendencies within the community, one quite traditional and the other very progressive<sup>166</sup>, the two institutions, nevertheless, opposed what were, from their perspective, the excesses of neo-nationalism and unilingualism, as well as

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> “Cronaca di una campagna,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 March 1975, 17; “Brillante impegno per la raccolta fondi: il contributo della A.C.W.A.,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 June 1975, 12; *La Comunita: Bolletino della fondazione N.C.I.C Quebec*, February 1977, 2; *La Comunita: Bolletino della fondazione N.C.I.C. Quebec*, May 1977, 1.

<sup>163</sup> Painchaud and Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec...*, 132.

<sup>164</sup> Carlo Levi, “Non piu cose ma protagonisti,” *Emigrazione*, 15 novembre 1968, 1-2; “A colloquio con Claudio Cianca segretario generale della F.I.L.E.F.,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 17 March 1977, 5; “Culture-harmonie-intégration,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 March 1977, 20; “Comunicato I.N.C.A., sezione di Montreal: il sindaco italiano assume una funzione internazionale,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 April 1977, 27.

<sup>165</sup> “L’impegno della F.I.L.E.F.,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 December 1977, 70.

<sup>166</sup> Painchaud and Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec...*, 135.

continued to assert the importance of a reasonable knowledge of both official languages for all of Canada's citizens, even after the enactment of Bill 101.<sup>167</sup>

Although Bill 101 was initially poorly received by the Anglophone and Allophone communities, with time, the city's non-French-speaking residents came to more or less accept the law, either as a reality to be adapted to or even as a necessity to protect the French language in Quebec.<sup>168</sup> Those English-speakers who did not agree with language legislation left for other Canadian or American cities.<sup>169</sup> It was this combination of strict measures, out-migration, as well as education and social consensus that made French the "social language, the language that most people use spontaneously in public, and the default language of public intercourse".<sup>170</sup> Moreover, the law "favoured the integration of immigrants into the French-speaking majority rather than the English-speaking minority."<sup>171</sup> Whereas in 1977, eighty percent of ethnic minorities attended English-language schools, today this percentage has reversed.<sup>172</sup> And, as of the 1970s, Quebec City gained jurisdiction over immigration, enabling the province to attract French-speaking migrants, either from European countries or their former colonies.<sup>173</sup> While positively affecting ethnic relations in the French-speaking province, these two measures have, nevertheless, failed to completely appease French-Canadian cultural insecurity, as English remains a power source of assimilation for newcomers and knowledge of the language is still a requirement for many jobs in the metropolis.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> "Notiziario F.I.L.E.F.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 28 April 1977, 12; "Le opinioni dei lettori: chi vuole dividere la comunita italiana?," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 June 1977, 12.

<sup>168</sup> Fraser, *Sorry I Don't Speak French*...., 157.

<sup>169</sup> There was net loss of approximately 275,000 people to other cities, who moved for political, economic, or linguistic reasons. This English-speaking out-migration is commonly referred to as the "Anglo Exodus": *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>172</sup> Benoît Aubin, "Une charte sur un toit brûlant," *L'Actualité*, 15 September 2007, 28-33.

<sup>173</sup> Fernand Harvey, "La question de l'immigration au Québec: gènesse historique" in *Le Québec français et l'école à clientele pluriéthnique, contributions à une réflexion* (Québec, Conseil de la langue française, 1985).

<sup>174</sup> Marc Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 212.

Xenophobic tendencies have also persisted in the province.<sup>175</sup> More than thirty years after its enactment, however, it should, and is, heralded as an enormous achievement.<sup>176</sup>

Inaugurating a “linguistic peace”, which a few decades previous would have been unimaginable<sup>177</sup>; the enactment of the Charter of French Language in 1977 has been referred to as the “re-conquest” of Montreal, accomplished after nearly two decades of “agitation”.<sup>178</sup> Yet, as we have seen, the intensity of the language debate did not come without a price with regards to French- and Italian-Canadian relations. The events of the 1960s and 1970s undoubtedly further solidified the Italian identity, which was then institutionalized by means of the *Congresso Nazionale degli Italo-Canadesi*. The Italian “third solitude”, as it was referred to within the community, was not only a product of marginalization, but, as I have argued, an attitude that was also aggressively asserted. In spite of the considerable linguistic tension permeating the city, significant progress was, nonetheless, made concerning the place of Italian-Canadians within the province’s unions<sup>179</sup>, although Italians remained, along with the Portuguese, amongst the worst paid workers in Quebec.<sup>180</sup> By the end of the 1970s, the C.S.N and the F.T.Q. were printing materials in languages other than French and English<sup>181</sup> and Italian-speaking staff members were hired to address immigrant unionists’ specific needs.<sup>182</sup> In other words, the principle of equity had been embraced.<sup>183</sup> Initiatives such as these, especially the unification of the collectivity’s institutions, were perceived as a sign of

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<sup>175</sup> Benoît Aubin, “Une charte sur un toit brûlant...”.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal...*, 2.

<sup>179</sup> As of the late 1980s, 46.5% of Italian immigrants were unionized, which was slightly higher than the Quebec average. See Painchaud and Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec...*, 106.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>181</sup> “Protezione per i lavoratori canadesi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 September 1975, 2.

<sup>182</sup> *Il Costruttore di Montreal: Pubblicato per il Sindacato della Costruzione di Montreal*, October, 1978, 5.

<sup>183</sup> *Il Costruttore di Montreal: Pubblicato per il Sindacato della Costruzione di Montreal*, December 1968, 5.

“maturity” by *Il Cittadino Canadese*<sup>184</sup>, since the *Congresso*, in particular, aided the Italian-Canadian leadership in providing formal structures to integrate new arrivals into the local context. Tangible proof of the community’s active role in the language debate, the umbrella-organization, in the eyes of some, enabled Italian-Canadians to effectively “stand up as citizens, not as immigrants”, in order to claim their well-earned place in Canadian and Quebecois society.<sup>185</sup>

As the Quiet Revolution was coming to a close, however, other, dissident members of the Italian community made their voices heard. Highly influenced by the radicalism of the era, the *Movimento progressista italo-quebecchese* called into question the politics of the Italian-Canadian leadership relied upon during the Saint-Léonard School Crisis. Adhering to the ideology embraced by the C.S.N., the M.P.I.Q. analyzed the language debate from a different perspective. In the same vein, the organization’s newsletter, *Il Lavoratore*, was far more leftist than any other Italian-Canadian publication, even in comparison to *Il Cittadino Canadese*, who encouraged workers to join unions and to strike, as well. Taking their analysis of immigrant exploitation to another level, the M.P.I.Q.’s activists dreamed of a socialist Quebec. Once their organization folded, they joined the ranks of the Montreal branch of the *Federazione italiana lavoratori emigrati e famiglie*, an Italian-based association which favoured international worker solidarity. Also alienated from the mainstream community, Marco Micone, an artist of the second-generation, went even further in his critique of the Italian elite, speaking out in public against the major institutions of the collectivity. As a supporter of Bill 101 and the *Parti Québécois*, Micone, nevertheless, remained true to his Italian-Canadian roots. The playwright supported the separatist project, as long as an independent Quebec would be accepting towards newcomers and minorities.<sup>186</sup> To this day, Micone remains committed to the idea of a tolerant, francophone Quebec.<sup>187</sup> A turning point in the political participation of Italian-Canadians, the language debate, in

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<sup>184</sup> “Rinnovato il consiglio direttivo della FAIQ: Pietro Rizzuto rieletto presidente dell’unanimità,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 May 1974, 12; “Notizie FAIQ: Giuseppe di Battista e il nuovo presidente: Il nuovo direttivo della Federazione,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 April 1977, 10.

<sup>185</sup> Taddeo, “The Language Debate in Quebec...,” 160-162.

<sup>186</sup> *Artisans de notre histoire : Marco Micone*. Dir. Pierre Lacombe. Montréal : Ciné Fête, 2002.

<sup>187</sup> Rima Elkouri, “Speak White, Speak What,” *La Presse*, 3 February 2008.

sum, firstly, provoked the unification of the community's institutions, and secondly, led to an ideological fragmentation, which was only compounded with the rise of the second-wave feminism, when the politically active Italian-Canadians divided once again, this time according to gender.



### Chapter 3

## The Feminist Challenge: Italian-Canadian Women's Activism, *Centro Donne Italiane*, 1978-1990

By the end of the 1970s there were two diverging political tendencies within the Montreal Italian-Canadian community, one quite “progressive” and the other very “traditional.” Adhering to the former, a group of young female students came together in 1978 to found the *Centro Donne Italiane*, or the Montreal Italian Women's Centre. Serving as a meeting place for women of the community, the *Centro Donne* hosted many educational and consciousness-raising events, concerning women's health, their place in the family and the workforce.<sup>1</sup> Though strongly influenced by the rising feminism in Quebec, the Montreal Italian Women's Centre was more so a response to the particular position of Italian women. As immigrant women, Italian-Canadian needs were not quite met within the province's mainstream women's movement. Nor, however, were they addressed within the Italian collectivity's male-dominated associations. Thus, in order to overcome their exclusion in both political spheres, young activists came together under the banner of the militant *Centro Donne Italiane*. Their political activism, as I will argue, was not only a source of affirmation and integration, but also enabled its proponents to successfully refute the prevalent stereotype of Italian immigrant women as “uninterested in politics and controlled by excessively patriarchal men.”<sup>2</sup> This chapter will, therefore, shed light on “perhaps the least understood aspect of Italian women's diasporic lives”: “their role as resisters, protesters, and activists.”<sup>3</sup> As we will see, a gendered interpretation of Italian-Canadian political participation will

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<sup>1</sup> Claude Painchaud and Richard Poulin, *Les Italiens au Québec* (Hull: Editions Asticou, 1988), 134.

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Guglielmo, *Negotiating Gender, Race and Coalition: Italian Women and Working-Class Politics in New York, 1880-1945* (PhD: University of Minnesota, 2003), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, “Women, Work, and Protest in the Italian Diaspora: An International Research Agenda,” *Labour/Le Travail* 42 (Fall 1998), 177.

provide an alternative, and sometimes conflicting, perspective on the Montreal community than outlined in previous chapters.<sup>4</sup>

Since the public face of Italian ethnic identity expressed in the Diaspora has been “almost exclusively male”, observers have been left with a biased impression of the community.<sup>5</sup> The image of the subservient wife and the iron-fisted husband originated here, as well as the general ignorance with regards to the lives of foreign-born women. Even within the community, men were much more likely to edit Italian-language newspapers, chair associations, as well as run for political office with the support of Italian-Canadian institutions behind them, than women.<sup>6</sup> These two tendencies have influenced the historical interpretation of Italian-Canadian adjustment and acculturation, due to the limitations of obviously male-centric sources and Anglo-Centric models of interpretation.<sup>7</sup> Emphasizing the collective quest for power and influence on the part of Italian women<sup>8</sup>, Chapter 3 will thus advance arguments stemming from anti-racist feminism, which “seeks to support difference without simply reiterating an objectifying framework.”<sup>9</sup> It will illustrate the perspective of politically active Italian-Canadian women, who did not hesitate to critique certain cultural traditions, yet within a specifically Italian framework. Never distanced from the ethnic enclave, these activists sought to provoke internal change, namely by founding the *Centro Donne Italiane* and opening its doors to women of all political stripes. Offering a combination of basic and feminist-inspired services, the organization empowered participants, while refusing to call into question the core values they held dear. In line with the increasing political discord brought to light in Chapter 2, a parallel, this time female, Italian-Canadian

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<sup>4</sup> Angeles Calliste and George Sefa Dei, eds., *Anti-Racist Feminism: Critical Race and Gender Studies* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2000), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Susanna Iuliano, *Sebben che siamo donne (Even Though We Are Women): A Comparative Study of Italian Immigrant Women in Canada and Australia* (PhD: McGill University, 2003), 346.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Franca Iacovetta and Donna Gabaccia, *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives: Italian Women Workers of the World* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Calliste and Sefa Dei, *Anti-Racist Feminism...*, 12.

community was formed, one where members had a very strong sense of belonging and, at the basis of which, lay a powerful identification.<sup>10</sup>

Expressing little to no interest in formal politics, Italian-Canadian women channelled their energies into grassroots feminist initiatives. Significantly, however, by doing so, they turned their backs on the major Italian-Canadian institutions, namely the *Congresso Nazionale degli Italo-Canadesi* and *Il Cittadino Canadese*. Though politicized, these organizations were either unresponsive or hostile to women's issues. Meanwhile, Italian women, as immigrant women, were the most under-paid, exploited, and discriminated against faction of the Quebec working-class, more so, than even their male counterparts. They were also pressured to conform to a rigid ideal of womanhood, based on a patriarchal version of Italian Catholicism. The Women's Centre's establishment therefore proved immigrant women's capacity to act with agency in spite of oppressive conditions. As discerned from the organization's newsletters, *Il Bollettino* and *L'altra faccia della luna*, multiple feminist currents were embraced by the founders of the *Centro Donne*. When they put them into practice, Italian-Canadian feminists essentially reconciled the otherwise opposing sets of political beliefs present within the community. With the over-arching goal of improving the lives of all Italian-Canadian women, the *Centro Donne* reflected the activism of a minority, the traditional values of the majority, while also reaching out to the rising second generation. And, as this chapter will conclude, the Women's Centre eventually served as a springboard to foster sisterly ties with other immigrant women, as well as French-Canadian activists open to anti-racist feminism.

## I. The Origins of the Italian-Canadian Feminist Identity

In the mid-1970s, Barbara Smith, a prominent African-American feminist, defined feminism as "the political theory and practice to free all women", regardless of race, class, or sexual orientation. "Anything less than this is not feminism", she maintained, "but merely female self-aggrandizement."<sup>11</sup> Referred to as "multiracial" feminism, this form of women's liberation, as embraced by activists such as Smith,

<sup>10</sup> Iacovetta and Gabaccia, "Women, Work, and Protest in the Italian Diaspora...", 25.

<sup>11</sup> Becky Thompson, "Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28 (Summer 2002), 340.

“challenged the hegemony of feminisms constructed primarily around the lives of white, middle-class women.”<sup>12</sup> A North-American phenomenon, this more inclusive, social justice-based, brand of feminism took root in Quebec, as a movement spearheaded by immigrant women and women of colour.<sup>13</sup> It was these women, belonging to marginalized groups, who, “in their efforts to expand the definition of feminism, contrived a new strand of personal politics”, steeped in identity.<sup>14</sup> To embrace an identity outside the “mainstream” was considered an “outwardly political gesture”, as well as “an act of self-empowerment.”<sup>15</sup> As we have seen, the Italian-Canadian identity has served as a powerful source of political mobilization. Though often offensive, it has also proven to be a defensive reaction in response to experiences with socio-economic inequality or prejudice. Identity has veritably been a key facet of Italian immigrant politics in Canada, as it has been for the women’s movement, in general.<sup>16</sup> Second-wave feminism indeed privileged awareness with regards to the significance of women’s experiences as a “means for action and organizing”.<sup>17</sup> Multiracial feminism, in particular, “brought together understandings drawn from the lived experiences of diverse groups of women.”<sup>18</sup> Italian-Canadian women’s experiences, like their politics, were certainly informed by their status as immigrants, women, and workers.

By the 1970s, Italian-Canadians were settled into Montreal society, having improved their socio-economic position, moved to the suburbs, and continued to adjust to Canadian and Quebecois culture. With many politicians of Italian origin elected to municipal office, union sections dedicated specifically to Italian workers, and the language debate resolved, the city’s Italian-Canadians had many reasons to be optimistic

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<sup>12</sup> Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, “Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism.” *Feminist Studies* 22 (Summer 1996), 321.

<sup>13</sup> Nicole Labbé, “Informations féministes: Juanita Rose Westmoreland-Traoré,” *La Gazette des femmes*, November-December 1986, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Louise Adams, “There’s No Place Like Home: On the Place of Identity in Feminist Politics,” *Feminist Review* 31 (Spring 1989), 24-25.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Marianne Githens, Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski, *Different Roles, Different Voices: Women and Politics in the United States and Europe* (New York: Harper Collins College, 1994), 250.

<sup>17</sup> Kathie Sarachild, “Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon” in K. Sarachild, C. Hanisch, F. Levine, B. Leon and C. Price, eds., *Feminist Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1978), 144-150.

<sup>18</sup> Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, “Theorizing Difference...,” 328.

about their future. Nonetheless, in spite of the significant progress made by the community as a whole, “the conditions of Italian women remained difficult.”<sup>19</sup> After flooding the labour market in “droves” in the 1950s, the overwhelming majority of Italian women still worked in the metropolis’ factories decades later.<sup>20</sup> There, they laboured under particularly trying circumstances, especially in the garment industry, where unions were normally strongly resisted by bosses. When unionization did exist, it was often under the auspices of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union, an organization known for its “inefficiency”. Italian-Canadian women possessed very little job security, workers’ benefits, or means to express grievances, relating to, for example, sexual harassment or discrimination.<sup>21</sup> Due to long hours on the job and low-education levels, these women never fully acquired French or English language skills, which only accentuated their marginalization.<sup>22</sup> As some have said, “there is nothing worse than being a worker, an immigrant, and a woman in Quebec”.<sup>23</sup> Although there were definite benefits to working for wages, notably escaping the drudgery of home life and greater financial independence, Italian-Canadian women’s labour remained “justified in terms of their commitment to the wealth and well-being of their families.” Their participation in the labour market, and the relative freedom it brought them, failed to “disrupt the traditional power relations” within Italian immigrant families, which were certainly quite patriarchal.<sup>24</sup>

Similar to French- and English-Canadian women, Italian-Canadian were not only second-class citizens in the workforce, but second-class citizens in the home, as well. While many scholars have underlined the indirect forms of power Italian women wielded over their husbands, Italian men were undoubtedly at the head of the household. Power relations were complex, of course. Yet, it could definitely be asserted that a very

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<sup>19</sup> Basilio Giordano, *I protagonisti italiani di Montreal* (Montreal: Published by Basilio Giordano, 1998), 319.

<sup>20</sup> Iuliano, “Sebben che siamo donne...,” 240.

<sup>21</sup> Micheline Dumont and Louise Toupin, *La pensée féministe au Québec, Anthologie (1900-1985)* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 2003), 611.

<sup>22</sup> Rassemblement des femmes immigrantes du Québec, *Compte-rendu du rassemblement des femmes immigrantes du Québec* (Montréal, Collectif des femmes immigrantes, 1990), 13.

<sup>23</sup> “Les immigrantes au Québec,” *La Gazette des femmes*, April 1980, 12-15.

<sup>24</sup> Iuliano, “Sebben che siamo donne...,” 276.

strict notion of what was considered female and male behaviour was maintained, to the clear benefit of men.<sup>25</sup> Since Italian Catholic values in Canada upheld an even more rigid, hetero-normative ideal than the North American mainstream, many supposedly female, passive character traits were exasperated.<sup>26</sup> Italian-Canadian wives were strongly encouraged to “suffer in silence”, “accept their fate”, and “put family interests before personal interests.”<sup>27</sup> They were also responsible for maintaining family honour, by means of their mothering skills and sexual faithfulness.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, a “good” daughter was expected to be “chaste, obedient to her father, and knowledgeable about the running of a household”.<sup>29</sup> Further enforcing patriarchal tendencies, immigrant men “largely filled the unskilled, low-paying jobs” of their adopted country, “where extra-familial sources of self-esteem were minimal.”<sup>30</sup> An Italian immigrant man’s self-worth was instead derived, “not only from his capacity as chief breadwinner, but also from his capacity to exercise control over his wife and daughters.”<sup>31</sup> When he failed in his role as provider, albeit rare, the brunt was quite literally borne by the women in his midst.<sup>32</sup> In a culture where family breakdown was looked down upon, and confusion over what

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>26</sup> Giordano, *I protagaonist italiani*..., 319.

<sup>27</sup> Iuliano, “Sebben che siamo donne....,” 147.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Harriet Perry, “The Metonymic Definition of the Female and the Concept of Honour Among Italian Immigrant Families in Toronto” in Betty Boyd Caroli, Robert F. Harney and Lydio F. Tomasi, eds., *The Italian Immigrant Women in North America: Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Conference of the American Italian Association in conjunction with the Canadian Italian Historical Association* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1978), 225.

<sup>30</sup> Colleen Johnson, “The Maternal Role in the Contemporary Italian-Canadian Family” in Betty Boyd Caroli, Robert F. Harney and Lydio F. Tomasi, eds., *The Italian Immigrant Women in North America: Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Conference of the American Italian Association in conjunction with the Canadian Italian Historical Association* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1978), 237.

<sup>31</sup> Franca Iacovetta, “Trying to Make Ends Meet: An Historical Look at Italian Women, the State and Family Survival Strategies in Postwar Toronto,” *Canadian Women’s Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 8 (Summer 1987), 7.

<sup>32</sup> As feminist scholars have asserted, the social and economic hardships endured by immigrants negatively influence internal family dynamics. Much more than belonging to a patriarchal culture, a minority woman’s problems related to physical abuse are “rooted in forces beyond one’s individual community.” See Leti Volpi, “Feminism versus Multiculturalism,” *Columbia Law Review* 101 (June 2001), 1211.

exactly constituted abuse existed, many battered wives never left their husbands.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore unsurprising, considering the rampant poverty present within the community in the 1950s and 1960s, that women, more than men, “suffered emotional and psychological scars engendered by the difficult early years”.<sup>34</sup>

As we know, the subordinate place of women in Canadian society was increasingly disputed by the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>35</sup> In Quebec, the women’s movement “took on its own rhythms”<sup>36</sup>. Unions were more open to “radical ideas”, while neo-nationalism “stimulated and nourished feminism”, providing its supporters with “important theoretical and conceptual tools” to combat women’s oppression.<sup>37</sup> But ethnic minorities in the French-speaking province, like elsewhere, experienced great difficulty integrating into mainstream feminist groups. In spite of the emphasis on sisterly solidarity, foreign-born women, who had a more difficult time expressing themselves, felt their voices did not carry the same weight as those of French-Canadians in women’s organizations.<sup>38</sup> As well, there was considerable prejudice directed towards immigrants in general, namely that they voluntarily lived in “ethnic ghettos” and manifested little “desire” to learn French, stereotypes which impeded true communication.<sup>39</sup> Finally, French-Canadian women were admittedly ignorant as to the specific challenges faced by immigrant women.<sup>40</sup>

With regards to feminist initiatives within the Italian-Canadian community, the male-dominated institutions did not go far enough in addressing the social and economic disparities between the sexes. In the 1960s, the journalists of *Il Cittadino Canadese*

<sup>33</sup> Iuliano, “Sebben che siamo donne....,” 152.

<sup>34</sup> Iacovetta, “Trying to Make Ends Meet...,” 9.

<sup>35</sup> John Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 332.

<sup>36</sup> Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005), 47.

<sup>37</sup> Manon Tremblay, “Quebec Women in Politics: A Reappraisal” in Veronica Strong-Boag, Mona Gleason and Adele Perry, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 380.

<sup>38</sup> Rassemblement des femmes immigrantes du Québec, *Compte-rendu du rassemblement...*, 24.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>40</sup> Conseil du statut de la femme, *Pour le Québécoises : égalité et indépendance* (Québec, Conseil du statut de la femme, 1978), 261.

discussed the hardships immigrant women faced in Montreal's factories, yet never critiqued the power imbalance between husbands and wives within the home.<sup>41</sup> In the 1970s, women's initiatives were only superficially reported on by the newspaper's contributors.<sup>42</sup> Even the progressive *Movimento progressista italo-quebecchese* (M.P.I.Q.) devoted very little space to Italian-Canadian women in *Il Lavoratore*. The M.P.I.Q. evidently did not consider gender a category of analysis in its own right, emphasizing, rather, the importance of class.<sup>43</sup> Whereas, in contrast, the concept of "interlocking inequalities" would have much better described the situation of Italian immigrant women, because they were oppressed by the combined forces of their ethnicity, class, and culture.<sup>44</sup> A reality that permeated their daily lives, the oppression of Italian immigrant women was thus, neither a cause of great concern for Italian-Canadian men, nor quite understood by French-Canadian women.

As illustrated in previous chapters, the post-War II Montreal Italian community was very politically active. Though the politicians, union leaders, and association presidents were all male, we could assume that Italian-Canadian women were politically conscious. After all, women read the same newspapers, worked under similar precarious conditions, and were equally affected by language legislation as men. Without a doubt, as immigrants or ethnic minorities in the 1970s, these women would have been acutely aware of their subordinate position, both within broader society, as well, however, as the Italian community. In fact, many second-wave feminists in the United States, often of either Italian or Jewish origin, "made quite plain the connection between the smothering

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<sup>41</sup> "L'ULIC ha celebrato la Festa del lavoro," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 7 September 1962, 2; Nicola Ciamarra, "Il mio punto di vista: dimensione nuova," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 3 March 1967, 3; "Attenzione: Membri dei Locali 205, 262, 439, 485 e 521: Unione Internazionale dei Lavoratori d'Abbigliamento Femminile," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 26 August 1966, 19; "I lavoratori italiani in Canada," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 27 June, 1968, 15.

<sup>42</sup> "La donne quebecchese e l'immigrato s'incontrano al 'Salone de la femme'," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 May 1971, 10; "1975: Anno delle donna," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 December 1974, 14; "Al salone internazionale della donna: una gioranta italiana," *Il Cittadino Candese*, 8 May 1975, 18; "Notizie della Federazione Italiana: attivita del comitato femminile," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 June 1975, 20; "Notizie della Federazione Italiana: dibattito sulla donna italiana," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 July 1975, 18; "Notizie della Federazione Italiana: 'Diagolo pubblico' per la donna italiana: l'intervento di Lise Bacon," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 17 July 1975, 18.

<sup>43</sup> "La donna italiana é la piu sfruttata," *Il Lavoratore: Organo del movimento progressista italo-quebecchese*, May 1971, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, "Theorizing Difference...," 322.



[ethnic] enclave and their own political commitments.”<sup>45</sup> It could definitely be asserted that a certain percentage of Italian women in Canada, namely those associated with the *Centro Donne Italiane*, were even more dedicated to the feminist cause than other Canadians, due to a heightened sense of inequality, gender-based or otherwise. Also, many of the women involved in the Women’s Centre, though not all, were second-generation Canadians.<sup>46</sup> Since their “basic needs would have been met”, they would have been able to dedicate the necessary time to feminist initiatives.<sup>47</sup> Finally, women with high levels of feminist consciousness, as many young, educated, Italian-Canadian women would have had, have proved to be those with “low scores on measures of authoritarianism”. They were women who have rejected “traditional authorities” and refused an “adherence to conventional mores.”<sup>48</sup> Considering the old-fashioned values upheld by the community, once they were refuted, it was only natural that a strong, progressive, activism ensued.

Although activists such as these were certainly a minority in a community that prized family, motherhood, and cultural maintenance, by broadening or challenging the definition of feminism, it could very well be maintained that these values would not have necessarily impeded the realization of feminist aspirations. More specifically, many women have been found to “support the goals of feminism”, but “reject the self-identification with the term ‘feminist’”.<sup>49</sup> For example, when interviewed by sociologists Micheline Labelle and Joseph Lévy, one anonymous Italian-Canadian women stated:

Il faudra répondre aux besoins des femmes; comme les femmes battues, les femmes violées. On parle de la contraception, de la planification familiale, des enfants, de l’avortement, du sida, de la vie sexuelle, de l’égalité en emploi, de l’égalité de la femme. On n’a jamais eu de féminisme. Ça commence avec les femmes comme moi...<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2006), 261.

<sup>46</sup> Micheline Labelle and Joseph Lévy, *Ethnicité et enjeux sociaux: Le Québec vu par les leaders de groupes ethnoculturels* (Montréal: Liber, 1995), 64.

<sup>47</sup> Duncan, “Motivation for Collective Action...,” 614.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 615.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>50</sup> Labelle and Lévy, *Ethnicité et enjeux sociaux...*, 33.

Clearly in favour of women's rights, albeit not a "feminist", this particular interviewee was most likely representative of the majority of the community's women. Concerning women's participation in the collectivity's mainstream institutions, "traditional" forms of feminism seemed to dominate. For example, in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, women journalists encouraged their counterparts to work outside the home in order to increase their personal satisfaction, though they never called into question the Italian-Canadian woman's role within the family. On the contrary, these women glorified motherhood and wifehood, evoking the power women could wield over their husbands and children.<sup>51</sup> "The woman is the Queen of the house", wrote Concetta Kosseim, who concluded by calling on women to embrace the "courage, pride and dignity" that it takes to be a woman.<sup>52</sup> In the eyes of the collectivity's "traditional" feminists, no fundamental change was needed. Women were encouraged to assert themselves, yet within the confines of the already-defined roles for Italian women.

Another very plausible explanation for the refusal to be perceived as a feminist was the negative connotation associated with the label. Also in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, were several articles written by male journalists who ridiculed and critiqued the women's movement both in Canada and in Italy.<sup>53</sup> For instance, "the feminist movement" wrote Michele Pirone, "is in many way 'a youthful fever'". Referring to women's protests, he continued, "After a while women will leave the streets to find a job...and a husband."<sup>54</sup> With regards to activism in Quebec, these Italian-Canadian men were very concerned over the direction their adopted province was taking. Citing *Pour les Québécoises: égalité et indépendance*, a feminist manifesto, Claudio Antonelli vehemently opposed the re-writing of schools' curriculum in the name of gender equality, claiming it would lead to "travestimento sessuale".<sup>55</sup> In another article,

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<sup>51</sup> Luisa Brizuela-Gérard, "La pagina di...Lulu: una donna nuova nel focolare domestico!", *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 July 1978, 21; Riky Garofoli, "Le donne sfruttate," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 24 January 1979, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Concetta Kosseim, "Il ruolo della donna nella società odierna," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 10 February 1977, 14.

<sup>53</sup> M.T., "Parità di sessi e nudismo", *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 April 1978, 4; Italo Istria, "12.000 'Yvette' al Forum: il femminismo ha stancato," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 16 April 1980, 1-2.

<sup>54</sup> M.T., "Parità di sessi e nudismo", *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 6 April 1978, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Claudio Antonelli, "L'anti-« faccocratico », ovvero l'inversione dei sessi: i nuovi educatori," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 28 June 1978, 1 and 10.

Antonelli maintained that French-Canadian women were exaggerating the challenges women faced in Quebec. Compared to other societies, he argued, North Americans had relatively little work to do. Most importantly, their women did their duties “without complaining.”<sup>56</sup> Concerning the advances of Italian feminism, Gianni Anelli only lamented the fact that “Italy is no longer the country it once was. All of its values have been lost.”<sup>57</sup> The stress on lost values would appear to be the common thread uniting the newspaper’s anti-feminists. Fearing the effects of women’s liberation on the nuclear family, many Italian-Canadian men, community leaders at that, believed women’s place was in the home, obedient to their husbands.<sup>58</sup> Considering the resurgent feminism within the community, however, the journalists of *Il Cittadino Canadese*, for the most part men, were becoming increasingly out of touch with a major component of Italian-Canadian political activism. The Italian-language publication was, therefore, no longer at the forefront of the collectivity’s political participation, as it had been since its inception.

Regardless of whether “traditional” or “progressive”, both versions of feminism supported by Italian-Canadian women obviously opposed the community’s predominant male opinion of the women’s movement. The activism, however tentative, espoused by *Il Cittadino Canadese*’s traditionally minded women journalists went far beyond the overtly sexist writings of their counterparts. Because of men’s derogatory attitude towards feminist ideology, the progressive, second-generation women were even more motivated to combat the chauvinism directed at them. Significantly, these observations would support the view that agency can exist “within patriarchy”.<sup>59</sup> Immigrant women were, in spite of very real constraints, still able to “create viable lives for themselves, their families, and their communities”<sup>60</sup>, whether by gaining new forms of confidence when working in Montreal’s factories, enjoying the closeness they shared with their

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<sup>56</sup> Claudio Antonelli, “Le femministe propongono: una società senza sessi,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 22 November 1978, 1 and 4.

<sup>57</sup> Gianni Anelli, “Italia sottosopra: l’Italia delle femministe,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 July 1977, 6-8.

<sup>58</sup> Michele Pirone, “La casalinghe e l’unità,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 January 1978, 1 and 4.

<sup>59</sup> Leti Volpp, “Feminism versus Multiculturalism,” *Columbia Law Review* 101 (June 2001), 1211.

<sup>60</sup> Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, “Theorizing Difference...,” 328.

children, or sharing their troubles with female family members or friends.<sup>61</sup> The foundation of the *Centro Donne Italiane* could, in fact, be viewed as the practical application of these forms of “women’s culture”.<sup>62</sup> Or, a subversion of the “structures of domination” imposed on Italian immigrant women.<sup>63</sup> With regards to the political role they were supposed to play within the community, Italian-Canadian women were neither expected nor encouraged to engage in any form of activism. Their identity, self-worth, and energies were based in the home, as dedicated wives and mothers.<sup>64</sup> For some women, however, Italian identification was, perhaps, far more proactive and militant, in spite of the messages they received from the broader collectivity.<sup>65</sup> Tellingly, the founders of the *Centro* were well-aware of the negative attention brought to them as a result of their activities and yet, proceeded with them anyway.<sup>66</sup>

## II. Putting Theory into Practice: *Centro Donne Italiane*

Located in Saint-Michel, an Italian-concentrated neighbourhood, the *Centro Donne Italiane* had a multi-faceted purpose, including both challenging and maintaining tradition, integrating into the Quebec women’s movement, yet remaining apart<sup>67</sup>. Its creation in 1978 was indeed seen as an “historic occasion” by its initial members.<sup>68</sup> The origins and aims of the Women’s Centre were, of course, linked to the socio-economic position of Italian-Canadian women, both within the Italian community, as well as broader Quebec society. Assunta Sauro, a co-founder, explained in the feminist publication, *Des luttes et des rires de femmes*:

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<sup>61</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 85 and 94-95.

<sup>62</sup> Iacovetta, “Trying to Make Ends Meet...,” 3.

<sup>63</sup> Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, “Theorizing Difference...,” 328.

<sup>64</sup> Iuliano, “Sebben che siamo donne...,” 344.

<sup>65</sup> Scholars, such as Leonie Huddy, have underlined the “subjective meaning of identities”. For example, American identification does not mean the same thing to all Americans. Instead, “it is the meaning of American identity, not its existence that determines its political consequences.” See Leonie Huddy, “From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory,” *Political Psychology* 22 (March 2001), 130.

<sup>66</sup> *Il Centro Donne Italiane, Il Coraggio di sognare, 1978-2003*. (Montréal: Il Centro Donne Italiane, 2004), 35.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>68</sup> “Il Centro Donne di Montreal nella comunita,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 August 1979, 23.

Nous sommes un groupe de femmes d'origine italienne qui essayons de nous soustraire au contrôle des structures communautaires mises sur pied par des notables. Durant toute notre vie, nous avons subi le contrôle de l'État par l'intermédiaire d'un père, d'un patron, d'un prêtre, d'un notable, qui décidaient pour nous, qui contrôlaient notre vie, notre corps, qui niaient notre autonomie de femmes. Nous avons compris que c'était à nous, comme à notre mère, qu'il incombait de perpétuer le rôle de l'immigrante en produisant et reproduisant une main-d'œuvre à bon marché.

A strong critic of capitalism, and its negative effects on migrant women workers, Sauro continued to denounce the chauvinistic attitude of Italian immigrant men in Montreal:

Une fois ici, le contrôle sur les femmes immigrantes devient plus prononcé pour éviter tout danger d'émancipation et de contact avec une réalité plus permissive. Ce contrôle passe non seulement par une structure familiale de clan qui isole la femme et lui nie toute possibilité de socialisation, même avec les autres femmes de voisinage (souvent la messe est la seule sortie autorisée), mais surtout par l'intermédiaire des structures sociales et des organismes « d'entraide » des notables. Souvent ceux-ci, grâce aux complicités fédérales et aux complicités institutionnelles, contrôlent la vie de la communauté italienne et renforcent l'idéologie réactionnaire et sexiste contre les femmes.

As yet another dissenting voice with regards to the unification of the community's institutions, here for feminist-inspired reasons, she then described the *raison d'être* of this particular organization in the same article :

Et nous, pour avoir vécu et subi ces rapports particuliers de pouvoir, pour nous soustraire à notre destin de « nouvelle immigrante », de « nouvelle épouse et mère », de citoyenne de seconde classe, nous sentons le besoin d'un centre autonome de femmes où nous pourrions confronter nos besoins, nos angoisses, nos expériences de vie avec d'autres femmes qui vivent les mêmes pressions sociales et familiales. Pour créer une nouvelle force et une nouvelle solidarité qui nous permettent de rompre l'isolement d'une formation et les structures qui puissent nous permettre d'acquérir un plus grand pouvoir social.<sup>69</sup>

Without a doubt, the *Centro Donne Italiane's* establishment was not only a reflection of the marginalization of Italian immigrant women, but also the heightened

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<sup>69</sup> Dumont and Toupin, *La pensée féministe au Québec...*, 645-648.

atmosphere of contestation of its time. Explaining the Quebec influence, Assunta Sauro stated in another interview:

We have to consider that during the 1970s in Quebec something was beginning to happen... People gathered and wanted to form groups with a specific purpose. And then various women's centres came into being. These centres fought for gender equality; equality at work, in politics, in the family and in society. We saw francophones concerned with all these themes that affect women's lives and we asked ourselves: and our women, where will they go, who will take care of them? We decided to mobilize and do something as well.<sup>70</sup>

In short, though inspired by French-Canadian politics, Italian-Canadian women sought to spearhead their own movement, in order to more effectively "contribute" to the lives of "our people", in the words of Sauro.<sup>71</sup> Italian-Canadian initiatives appeared to mirror the approach of Italian feminists, who understood politics as a "daily engagement" and, thus, set up Women's Centres from Milan to Rome in the 1970s. Each *Centro Donne* "promoted specific projects"<sup>72</sup>, which were reflective of the "interests of the women who ran them, the local situation and traditions, and the developments both in women's politics and in the larger, national, and international scenario"<sup>73</sup>. The case in Montreal, as well, the *Centro Donne* was, in fact, the product of the merging of two groups. The first, *Il Collettivo*, to which Assunta Sauro belonged, consisted of young students. The second, the *Associazione femminile di St-Michel*, was led by Isa Iasenza, the other co-founder of the Women's Centre, and was joined by older women.<sup>74</sup> The latter association emphasized the lack of services for Italian women in immigrant neighbourhoods<sup>75</sup>, while the former, second-wave feminism. Regardless as to which camp they belonged, and tensions indeed existed between the two, the organization's initial members veritably sought to empower Italian-Canadians, as a group and as individuals, with the explicit aspiration of enabling the community's women to acquire

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<sup>70</sup> *Il Centro Donne Italiane, Il Coraggio di sognare...*, 36.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp, eds., *Italian Feminist Thought: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>74</sup> *Il Centro Donne Italiane, Il Coraggio di sognare...*, 34.

<sup>75</sup> "Associations de femmes: association des femmes de St-Michel, pour briser l'isolement," *Il Bollettino*, November-December 1987, 20.

autonomy and power. Similar to the Italian community's political participation in previous decades, activists organized primarily along ethnic lines, and, once again, focused on the collectivity, not the individual.

Feminist organizations have proved to be vital in "perpetuating the development and spread of feminism."<sup>76</sup> The *Centro Donne Italiane* was part of the "younger branch" of these organizations, which were usually "small, localized, and collectivist."<sup>77</sup> Evidence of this approach can be found in the Women's Centre's monthly newsletter, *Il Bollettino*. An expression of Italian-Canadian feminism, the publication was a means of reflection, discussion, and communication for and about Italian immigrant women in Montréal.<sup>78</sup> Serving as a socialization tool, like other Italian-Canadian publications, the newsletter's writings called on all women of the community to play an active role in the organization's functioning via its general assemblies.<sup>79</sup> Since participants were given the opportunity to express their opinions in its pages, *Il Bollettino* also became a forum to air grievances, which, true to feminist practice, were dealt with in an open and democratic manner.<sup>80</sup> Its "direct democracy" was notably critiqued by one author, who maintained that complete equality amongst participants produced a weak and ineffective leadership. The *Centro*'s non-hierarchical philosophy, in her view, led to a paradoxical classification of members based on seniority. These two deficiencies left the Women's Centre vulnerable to outside, "patriarchal" influences.<sup>81</sup> Similar to any other kind of association, there were indications of conflict stemming from ideological divergences. Isa Iasenza, a co-founder, referred to the opposition between women who favoured "radical" means, such as Assunta Sauro, to those who emphasized the prudence of "gradual change".<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, these sorts of tensions appeared to have subsided. As Antonella Perzia, a regular contributor editorialized in *Il Bollettino*, each individual

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<sup>76</sup> Patricia Martin, "Rethinking Feminist Organizations," *Gender and Society* 4 (June 1990), 183.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>78</sup> "Editoriale," *Il Bollettino*, October 1983, 3.

<sup>79</sup> "Domenica, 27 Gennaio 1985, alle ore 13.00," *Il Bollettino*, January 1985, 5; "C'eravate anche voi all'Assemblea Generale?," *Il Bollettino*, April 1985, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Martin, "Rethinking Feminist Organizations...," 190.

<sup>81</sup> "Sur la mode de participation...," *Il Bollettino*, September, 1984, 7-11.

<sup>82</sup> *Il Centro Donne Italiane, Coraggio di sognare...*, 34.

woman, regardless of her political orientation, “should and must” feel a duty to make the Women’s Centre work, since it “was the only feminist organization within the Italian community”. The women of the *Centro Donne* were thus determined to function in an alternative manner, distinguishing themselves, with pride, from the rest of the Italian-Canadian leadership, who were more business-oriented and hierarchically organized.<sup>83</sup>

In order to reach all factions of the community, not only the women associated with the *Centro Donne*, the Women’s Centre published articles in *Il Cittadino Canadese*, which, in spite of its sexist tendencies, reverted to its role as a communication medium, promoting the causes of Italian-Canadian activists. Like Italian political participation in the past, the Women’s Centre’s activities aimed to increase Italian immigrant women’s “participation in the social and political life of Quebec”.<sup>84</sup> With the goal of further integrating Italian-Canadian woman into the economic and social spheres of Montreal, numerous information and educational sessions were held, addressing everything from literacy to unions to legal issues.<sup>85</sup> French and English language lessons were a key component of the centre’s programming, because even after decades in Montreal many Italian women possessed very little knowledge of the official languages, due, in part, to poor public policy.<sup>86</sup> Health promotion was an important issue as well, and numerous conferences were held on the topic. Italian- and French-speaking specialists came to the *Centro Donne* to speak about knowledge of one’s female body, menopause, nutrition, contraception and work-related health problems.<sup>87</sup> Not only internally-focused, the Women’s Centre was also involved in broader, externally-oriented initiatives. For

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<sup>83</sup> Perzia, Antonella. “Editoriale,” *Il Bollettino*, October 1985, 3.

<sup>84</sup> “Domenica, 27 Gennaio 1985, alle ore 13.00,” *Il Bollettino*, January 1985, 5.

<sup>85</sup> “Comunicato: integrazione alfa verso l’autonomia,” *Il Bollettino*, November 1983, 6; “La donna e il lavoro,” *Il Bollettino*, September 1985, 12.

<sup>86</sup> Aleyda Lamotte, *Les autres Québécoises: étude sur les femmes immigrées et leur intégration du marché du travail québécois*. (Montréal: ministère des Communautés culturelles et de l’immigration/direction des communications et direction de la recherche, 1985), 27.

<sup>87</sup> “Sessione di menopausa al Centro Donne,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 12 March 1980, 15; “Conferenza organizzata dal Centro Donne,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 May 1980, 18; “Taccuino sociale: Centro Donne Montreal,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 15 October 1980, 18; “Il Programma della Salute preparato dal centro donne,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 5 November 1980, 18; “Attività del Centro Donne: la violenza subita alla donna,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 4 February 1981, 9; “Centro Donne Montreal: conferenze d’informazione sulla salute delle: Pianificazione familiare,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 February 1981, 22.



instance, International Women's Day was a popular event at *Centre Donne*.<sup>88</sup> And, the women to the Women's Centre mobilized in favour of poverty-reducing measures across Canada, attending rallies in Quebec City and Ottawa.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the *Centro Donne* remained for the most part concentrated on the women of the Italian community. The vast majority of the organization's activities were geared towards empowering participants, as individuals and as members of a collectivity. It was in the pages of *Il Bollettino* and *L'altra faccia della luna* that Italian-Canadian women were exposed to the ideologies embraced by the Women's Centre founders, as well as subversive analyses of the community to which they belonged.

The *Centro Donne Italiane*'s newsletters were revolutionary if not for the sole reason that they openly discussed issues which normally, for Italian-Canadians, remained behind closed doors. Italian-Canadian women were encouraged to seek help for mental health and emotional "problems" at the Women's Centre, as they would go to, as one woman wrote, a doctor "for a broken arm".<sup>90</sup> Sometimes going no further, the monthly newsletter simply wrote in black and white what most women surely felt, such as isolation, pervasive sadness, or over-work due to "double duty".<sup>91</sup> Other times, *Il Bollettino* or *L'altra faccia della Luna* criticized aspects of the community's culture. Shattering the "mythical status" of the Italian family<sup>92</sup>, an analytical perspective in this regard was adopted. One woman wrote that in her view, it seemed that "according to the

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<sup>88</sup> "Noi e il femminismo: le strade, la notte, donne senza paura," *Il Bollettino*, October 1983, 6; "Noi che non vogliamo ammazzare," *Il Bollettino*, November 1983, 3; Antonella Perzia, "Editoriale: il Decennio delle Donne," *Il Bollettino*, January 1985, 3; "L'otto marzo - La Nostra Giornata!," *Il Bollettino*, March 1985, 3; "La giornata internazionale della donna," *Il Bollettino*, March, April 1988, 16; "8 marzo Giornata Internazionale della Donna: la marcia di protesta," *L'altra faccia della luna*, May 2004, 5; "Ricchi e poveri!," *L'altra faccia della luna*, December 2004, 3; "Marcia mondiale delle donne," *L'altra faccia della luna*, March 2005, 3.

<sup>89</sup> "Le donne italiane e la marcia contro la poverta," *L'altra faccia della luna*, October 1995, 6; "Marcia mondiale delle donne 2000," *L'altra faccia della luna*, October 2000, 4; "La pagina del Centro: Manifestazione a Quebec," *L'altra faccia della luna*, Spring 2003, 15.

<sup>90</sup> "Mot de la directrice," *L'altra faccia della luna*, Autumn 2002, 6.

<sup>91</sup> "La donna italo-canadese," *Il Bollettino*, October 1983, 9; "Riceviamo," *Il Bollettino*, October 1983, 11; "La donna e la salute: la solitudine," *Il Bollettino*, November 1983, 7; Mariangela di Domenico, "Il lavoro casalingo: perspectives d'analyses," *Il Bollettino*, July-August 1984, 5-6; Antonella Perzia, "La ripartizione dei compiti," *Il Bollettino*, July-August 1984, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Edwige Giunta, "Where They Came From: Italian American Women Writers as Public Intellectuals" in Philip Cannistraro and Gerald Meyer, eds., *The Lost World of Italian-American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 302.

Italian family, women were important only for procreation, only to be a wife and mother." Upon marriage, a woman was supposed to "lose her own identity, ignore her own thoughts and emotions." "The victim of her own altruism", she continued, the Italian-Canadian woman was, in her view, essentially doomed to misery.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, women were even encouraged to leave their husbands, as well as to seek legal and medical help, when subjected to domestic violence.<sup>94</sup> Breaking the code of silence surrounding abuse, the organization's publication attempted to convince the community's women to do the same. If needed, the Women's Centre could help find temporary refuge or legal assistance.<sup>95</sup> Clearly going against the ingrained notion of a united family at all costs, the women of the *Centro Donne* called into question Italian-Canadian traditions, without, however, a judgmental or condescending attitude. Men were not "othered" as backwards or inferior in comparison to the Canadian-born.<sup>96</sup> Rather, writers acknowledged the "low status" of Italian immigrant men in broader Canadian society, and the "dangers" this posed to physical and mental health of women.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to the place of the woman within the family, another major issue for the Women's Centre was Catholicism, or, more specifically, the religion's apparent anti-feminism. As discerned from *Il Bollettino*, it was obvious that many members distanced themselves from the Church. When Pope John Paul II visited Montreal in 1984, a memorandum was issued in the publication's pages, referring to the institution he presided over as one of the most "patriarchal and misogynist."<sup>98</sup> Yet, the activists made clear that they were aware that most Italian-Canadian women were practicing Catholics, at least to some extent.<sup>99</sup> While respecting the beliefs of these women, the Women's

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<sup>93</sup> "La donna italo-canadese," *Il Bollettino*, October 1983, 9.

<sup>94</sup> "La violenza coniugale," *Il Bollettino*, September-October 1987, 5.

<sup>95</sup> "Violenza familiare," *Il Bollettino*, November-December 1987, 11.

<sup>96</sup> Karen Dubiński and Franca Iacovetta, "Murder, Womenly Virtue, and Motherhood: The Case of Angelina Napolitano, 1911-1922," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, no.4 (December 1991), 531.

<sup>97</sup> "La donna italo-canadese," *Il Bollettino*, October 1983, 9.

<sup>98</sup> "Communiqué," *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, 26.

<sup>99</sup> "Editoriale," *Il Bollettino*, October 1984, 3.

Centre still supported a woman's right to free contraception and abortion on demand.<sup>100</sup> This opinion stemmed from the conviction that a woman's body was her own and only she could decide whether or not to get pregnant or carry a baby to term. No "institution" should dictate her choices. Similarly, each adult, woman or man, should have the ability to divorce her or his spouse if so desired.<sup>101</sup> Even then, however, the authors' writings remained geared towards their readership. There was an article that asserted it was, in fact, possible to reconcile "feminism" and "faith". In this view, sexism within Catholicism was a reflection of male chauvinism in a patriarchal society, not vice versa. God, embodying both the Mother and the Father at the same time, would not have created woman as an unequal and thus, to subordinate His creation, could be regarded as sinful.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, sexual relations within marriage, according to Antonella Perzia, should be regarded as a source of pleasure, as opposed to solely the means to conceive, because God granted women with the physical ability to enjoy them.<sup>103</sup> Underlining the competing definitions of liberation within the women's movement<sup>104</sup>, Italian-Canadian feminists criticized Italian Catholic values by relying upon the same framework, leaving it altered, but not fundamentally changed.

As exemplified by the *Centro Donne Italiane's* stance on the family and religion, these leaders were not interested in completely denouncing Italian culture, but, instead, they worked from within, slowly infusing women's core values with feminist attitudes.<sup>105</sup> With the above-mentioned goal in mind, the Montreal Italian Women's Centre organized meetings entitled *Café Rencontre*. Held in Italian, they encouraged women to "leave the four walls" of their homes, "chat" while having coffee, and discuss subjects "pertinent" to them. Often guest-speakers were invited in order to share advice

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<sup>100</sup> "La posizione del Centro Donne Montreal sul contracccezione e sull'aborto," *Il Bollettino*, October 1984, 10.

<sup>101</sup> "La donna e la chiesa," *Il Bollettino*, October 1984, 5.

<sup>102</sup> "Le due 'F' – Femminismo e fede – Alleate o nemiche?," *Il Bollettino*, October 1984, 7.

<sup>103</sup> Antonella Perzia, "Lo scopo del sesso è 'solo' la procreazione?," *Il Bollettino*, October 1984, 11.

<sup>104</sup> Thompson, "Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism...," 338.

<sup>105</sup> Feminist collectives in Italy adopted consciousness-raising techniques, where "participants attitudes towards their daily lives were often affected." These groups "tried to promote a change in values." See Yasmine Ergas, "1968-1979. Feminism and the Italian Party System: Women's Politics in a Decade of Turmoil," *Comparative Politics* 14 (April 1982), 262.

on, for example, personal empowerment or sexuality.<sup>106</sup> Taboo topics within the community, particularly the latter, the more hesitant Italian-Canadian women were hereby allowed to “break the ice”.<sup>107</sup> Modelled on the tactic of “consciousness-raising”, or *autocoscienza* in Italian<sup>108</sup>, these discussion groups were a key component of the women’s liberation movement in both North America and Europe. They did not seek to “change a woman”, except in sense of “knowing more”, which would then, hopefully, prompt them to organize and to act on a mass scale.”<sup>109</sup> In the same vein, the Women’s Centre was loosely defined as a “meeting place for women”, a place to “belong”, receive “advice”, “increase personal autonomy”, “overcome difficulties”, and “discuss freely amongst women”<sup>110</sup>, while its exact significance was to be determined by the individual participant. For some women, the *Centro Donne* was considered a springboard to direct forms of political activism, such as protests, or as a means to improve the condition of the Italian immigrant women, in addition to, for instance, her self-esteem.<sup>111</sup> For other women, however, perhaps even the majority, the organization was somewhere to go for help, confide in women outside one’s immediate family, overcome long-standing sadness, or to learn French and English in order to converse with grandchildren.<sup>112</sup> Over time, participants may have become more politicized. In the case of Maria Morabito, at least, she first came to learn English, then she lent a hand in organizing, and eventually she protested against globalization and women’s poverty under the banner of the Women’s Centre.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, all women were welcomed at *Centro Donne Italiane*, regardless of political orientation. Though the *Centro Donne* remained decidedly radical in approach, traditionally minded women were, as evidenced here, welcomed and

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<sup>106</sup> “Café rencontre,” *Il Bollettino*, November 1983, 15; “Café rencontre,” *Il Bollettino*, June 1984, 17; “Café rencontre,” *Il Bollettino*, October 1985, 16; “Café rencontre,” *Il Bollettino*, September-October 1987, 8.

<sup>107</sup> “Café rencontre,” *Il Bollettino*, June 1984, 17.

<sup>108</sup> Bono and Kemp, *Italian Feminist Thought*..., 83.

<sup>109</sup> Sarachild, “Consciousness-Raising...,” 144-150.

<sup>110</sup> Assunta Sauro, “Cos’è un Centro Donne?,” *L’altra faccia della luna*, October 1996, 2.

<sup>111</sup> Iva Salerio, “Riflessione sul Centro Donne,” *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, 21; Antonella Perzia, “Riflessione sul Centro Donne,” *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, 23.

<sup>112</sup> Giovanna de Martino, “Riflessione sul Centro Donne,” *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, 4; Emilia Di Lullo, “Riflessione sul Centro Donne,” *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, 12.

<sup>113</sup> Il Centro Donne Italiane, *Coraggio di sognare*..., 60-61.

embraced, due to the over-arching goal of the organization, which was to empower Italian-Canadian women.

A consensus present throughout the pages of *Il Bollettino* and *L'altra faccia della luna* was the need to increase participation, in particular amongst women of the second-generation. It was agreed upon that the *Centro Donne* was an ideal setting to learn more about the feminism within the community, since many young Italian-Canadians were still in touch with their immigrant roots and lived with, for better or worse, an Italian Catholic culture.<sup>114</sup> Reaching out to the second-generation, the Women's Centre aimed to provide avenues so young women could seek advice, because most "had no one to talk to."<sup>115</sup> Generational tension was the norm, and conflict reigned between mothers and daughters.<sup>116</sup> A pressing community issue in general, Italian parents and their offspring were having an increasingly difficult time relating to each other. Caught between two cultures, two value systems, and a minimum of two languages, Italian-Canadian teenagers experienced more trouble in school and in broader society than French- or English-Canadians.<sup>117</sup> For girls especially, their parents' traditional mentality inhibited North American-style dating and socializing.<sup>118</sup> Adopting a progressive attitude, the *Centro Donne Italiane* hosted a colloquium in order to assist mothers overcome the emotional and cultural barriers between themselves and their children. Emphasis was placed on dialogue and mutual understanding, rather than the more traditionally Italian, authoritarian view of parenting.<sup>119</sup> The women of the organization realized that most youngsters saw both the negative and positive aspects of their parents' culture, and tried to reconcile the divergences between the two, as well as the differences

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<sup>114</sup> Emilia Di Lullo, "Riflessione sul Centro Donne," *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, 12; Antonella Perzia, "Riflessione sul Centro Donne," *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, p.23; Carolina Eleazzaro, "Seconda generazione," *L'altra faccia della luna*, September 2006, 4.

<sup>115</sup> Emilia Di Lullo, "Riflessione sul Centro Donne," *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, 12.

<sup>116</sup> "Café rencontre," *Il Bollettino*, September-October 1987, 8; Maria Morabito, "Madre e figlia: Due generazioni in conflitto," *L'altra faccia della luna*, October 1996, 3.

<sup>117</sup> "Fondazione N.C.I.C. - Servizi comunitari: i rapporti fra genitori e figli," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 September 1975, 20; Maria Predelli, "L'insegnamento dell'italiano e l'integrazione degli italiani in Canada," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 28 April 1977, 18.; Franco Gucciardo, "L'opinione dei lettori: riflessioni sulla fondazione N.C.I.C.," *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 9 February 1978, 7; "Dossier: femmes immigrantes: les enjeux," *La Gazette des femmes*, March-April 1986, 11-16.

<sup>118</sup> Carolina Eleazzaro, "Seconda generazione," *L'altra faccia della luna*, September 2006, 4.

<sup>119</sup> "Colloquio federazione," *Il Bollettino*, January-February 1988, 2.

between the Italian- and Canadian-born generations.<sup>120</sup> The Women's Centre also created recreational activities for Italian-Canadian girls, including, for example, get-togethers with the aim of fostering assertiveness, knowledge about one's body, and personal responsibility.<sup>121</sup> A sign of the effectiveness of its programming, in recent years, second-generation Italian-Canadian mothers have been coming to the *Centro Donne Italiane* with their children, essentially for the same reasons their mothers did.<sup>122</sup>

A major gain for the women's liberation movement, feminist organizations were "reported to have improved members' self-esteem, sense of power and autonomy, skills and knowledge, political awareness, and consciousness of women's oppression."<sup>123</sup> Evidence of these advancements for Italian-Canadian women can be found in the pages of *Il Bollettino* and *L'altra faccia della luna*.<sup>124</sup> As Isa Iasenza editorialized, "the opening and organization of *Centro Donne Italiane* was for me – like for many others – the realization of a dream, a desire, a will to create something for myself and the Italian women of Montreal." According to this co-founder, her involvement led to vital "personal-growth", "knowledge of the Italian community", "political experience with regards to organizing, planning, contact with the public etc", "a feeling of belonging to something outside her family and her job", and "so many other things impossible to put into words."<sup>125</sup> For the many participants, similar improvements were noted, especially with regards to their general outlook and self-image. Domenica Casola, for example, "found comfort, kindness, and lots of encouragement" at the "remarkable" *Centro Donne*, whose staff assisted her in "learning to love herself" and acquiring "self-confidence."<sup>126</sup> Concerning the Italian-Canadian woman's place within the community, moderate improvements have been remarked with regards to select community institutions. As one member of the Women's Centre testified:

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<sup>120</sup> Renée Rowan, "Féminin pluriel: portraits, Isa Iasenza," *Il Bollettino*, October 1984, 14 and 16.

<sup>121</sup> "Progetto per ragazze italiane di Montreal-Nord," *Il Bollettino*, October 1983, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Maria Morabito, "Nuovo progetto al Centro Donne Italiane di Montreal," *L'altra faccia della luna*, February 2004, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Martin, "Rethinking Feminist Organizations...", 194.

<sup>124</sup> Emilia Di Lullio, "Danger: femmes au travail," *Il Bollettino*, April 1985, 8. "Riceviamo e pubblichiamo. Lettera firmata," *L'altra faccia della luna*, March 2005, 6.

<sup>125</sup> "Isa Iasenza, membro C.A.," *Il Bollettino*, September 1984, 16-17.

<sup>126</sup> Domenica Casola, "Freedom to Fly," *L'altra faccia della luna*, March 2005, 7.

Quand on a commencé avec Centro Donne, nous étions définies comme des putains, c'était aussi simple que ça, des femmes qui étaient divorcées, qui étaient pour l'avortement. Par la suite, Centro Donne a été accepté comme un autre groupe dans la communauté. On l'accepte parce qu'il donne des services, ce n'est plus quelque chose de menaçant. A la Casa d'Italia, il y a maintenant deux femmes d'administration, trois, peut-être plus. Avant, il n'y en avait aucune.<sup>127</sup>

The *Centro Donne Italiane's* overall success was, perhaps, due to the image it held in the minds of the women of the community. Participants considered the Women's Centre a "big family"<sup>128</sup>, and described working and coming there like being at "home".<sup>129</sup>

Although dedicated to amelioration of their own community, the women of the *Centro Donne Italiane* did not make the mistake of becoming so immersed in "sorting out" their own oppression, that they ignored the possibility of taking concrete action for structural change.<sup>130</sup> On the contrary, the Women's Centre was one of the many "building blocks" of the militant *Collectif des femmes immigrantes*<sup>131</sup>, an umbrella organization whose first coordinator was an Italian immigrant woman, Aoura Bizzari. While involved in Italian-Canadian feminist politics, Bizzari still believed that it was essential to "move beyond ethnicity",<sup>132</sup> because all women in Quebec, regardless of ethnic or linguistic origin, endured a male-dominated society<sup>133</sup>. The *Collectif's* members sought to "build bridges" with French-Canadian feminists<sup>134</sup>, who, in turn, manifested increased interest towards their minority counterparts in the 1980s and

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<sup>127</sup> Labelle and Lévy, *Ethnicité et enjeux sociaux...*, 65.

<sup>128</sup> Maria Grazia Iannazzo, "Testimonia," *L'altra faccia della luna*, September 2005, 12.

<sup>129</sup> Il Centro Donne Italiane, *Coraggio di sognare...*, 49.

<sup>130</sup> Mary Louise Adams, "There's No Place Like Home: On the Place of Identity in Feminist Politics," *Feminist Review*, 31 (Spring 1989), 24-26.

<sup>131</sup> Adams, "There's No Place Like Home...", 27.

<sup>132</sup> Simonne Monent-Chartrand, *Pionnières Québécoises et Regroupements de femmes, 1970-1990* (Montréal: Les Editions du remue-ménage, 1994), 105-106.

<sup>133</sup> Collectif des femmes immigrantes du Québec, *Femmes immigrantes du Québec: L'enjeu des années 90* (Montréal: Collectif des femmes immigrantes du Québec, 1990), 70.

<sup>134</sup> "Dossier: femmes immigrantes: les enjeux," *La Gazette des femmes*, March-April 1986, 11-16.

1990s.<sup>135</sup> Several articles in *La Gazette des femmes*, for example, were dedicated to the unique challenges faced by the province's immigrant women, as well as profiles of ethnic minority activists.<sup>136</sup> Whether by means of the *Collectif de femmes immigrantes'* publications or *La Gazette des femmes*, these immigrant women emphasized the notion of "collective responsibility" with regards to language training<sup>137</sup>, violence against women<sup>138</sup>, and racism<sup>139</sup>, from which the Quebec women's movement was not immune<sup>140</sup>. As a key supporter of multiracial feminism, the *Centro Donne Italiane* should, therefore, be regarded as an activist "home" for women involved in the umbrella-organization, a place to draw "sustenance" from<sup>141</sup>, before joining other Francophone, Anglophone, and Allophone women in their pursuit for gender and racial equality.

With the explicit goal of improving the everyday lives of Italian immigrant women, the *Centro Donne Italiane* should be considered one of the community's greatest political achievements. As an institution that aimed to continue its quest for

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<sup>135</sup> "Une place pour les femmes des communautés culturelles," *La Gazette des femmes*, September-October 1983, 27; "Le Collectif des femmes immigrants de Montréal," *La Gazette des femmes*, July-August 1985, 31.

<sup>136</sup> Hélène Lévesque, "La travail: un Tiers-Monde chez nous," *La Gazette des femmes*, July-August 1983, 7; Nicole Geoffrey, "Une place pour les femmes des communautés culturelles," *La Gazette des femmes*, September-October 1983, 27; "Danae Theodorakopoulos," *La Gazette des femmes*, November-December 1985, 28; Nicole Labbé, "Québécoises d'adoption: être vietnamienne à Québec," *La Gazette des femmes*, January-February 1986, 33; Nicole Labbé, "Québécoises d'adoption: pas facile de dire: 'Ce soir, je sors'," *La Gazette des femmes*, July-August 1986, 33. Nicole Labbé, "Québécoises d'adoption: peut-on être musulmane et féministe?," *La Gazette des femmes*, September-October 1986, 30; "Tassia Helen Giannakis: mieux intégrer les Québécoises d'adoption," *La Gazette des femmes*, November-December 1989, 24.

<sup>137</sup> Rassemblement des femmes immigrantes du Québec, *Compte-rendu du rassemblement des femmes immigrantes du Québec...*, 12-13. Collectif des femmes immigrantes du Québec, *Femmes immigrantes du Québec...*, 39-42.

<sup>138</sup> "Dossier: femmes immigrantes: les enjeux," *La Gazette des femmes*, March-April 1986, 11-16.

<sup>139</sup> Collectif des femmes immigrantes du Québec, *Je ne suis pas raciste, mais... Cahier de réflexion et de sensibilisation sur les relations interculturelles* (Montréal: Collectif des femmes immigrantes, 1994), 72.

<sup>140</sup> "Des femmes l'exercent," *La Gazette des femmes*, March-April 1988, 23-27.

<sup>141</sup> Adams, "There's No Place Like Home...," 27.



positive change, the Women's Centre celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2003.<sup>142</sup> A time for much "joy" and "happiness", the organization vowed to continue its quest to help Italian-Canadians "gain recognition and confidence"<sup>143</sup>, while reaching out to the women of the second-generation, which, though born in Canada, retained aspects of their families' culture<sup>144</sup>. Publishing a commemorative book, entitled *Il coraggio di sognare*, or *The Courage to Dream*, the organization capitalized on the occasion to look back on its past and forward towards its future.<sup>145</sup> As discerned from this publication, as well as *Il Bollettino* and *L'altra faccia della luna*, it can definitely be maintained that with the emphasis placed on empowerment, awareness, and self-help, women who were less militant were able to participate in the *Centro Donne*'s activities. Their presence, however, did not impede the more activist members from protesting in Ottawa and Quebec City or challenging the narrow definition of womanhood upheld by the broader Italian community. Since any form of involvement on the part of the collectivity was considered a sign of success, and criticism with regards to Italian-Canadian cultural practices, embraced by most women, did not mirror the initial feminist, ethnocentric analyses, the two, so-called progressive and traditional, political tendencies present amongst Italian immigrant women were essentially reconciled. Yet, regardless of their ideological leaning, and perhaps the Women's Centre's greatest strength, participants enjoyed being able to socialize amongst other Italian women, cultivate friendships, and escape from the drudgery of housework.<sup>146</sup> Contributing to the already-established women's culture within the community, the *Centro Donne* was the home away from home for many women, as well as the undisputed heart of Italian immigrant feminism in Montreal.

Though Italian-Canadian women have had a negligible place in the formal political system, especially when compared to their male counterparts, they have undoubtedly created their own forms of political participation. Building upon the leftist

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>143</sup> Patrizia Mastrandrea, "My 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," *L'altra faccia della luna*, February, 2004, 5.

<sup>144</sup> Il Centro Donne Italiane, *Coraggio di sognare...*, 37.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-31.

<sup>146</sup> Sara Palumbo, "Amicia tra donne," *L'altra faccia della luna*, March 2005, 5.

political activism present within the community in the 1970s, women such as Assunta Sauro and Isa Iasenza contributed to the anti-racist and multi-racial feminist initiatives in Montreal, assisting not only Italian immigrants, but women of all ethnic backgrounds. Moving in spheres parallel to those of Italian-Canadian men, the founders of the *Centro Donne* also advanced the political break-up of the Montreal Italian community. Originating with the language debate of the 1960s and 1970s, the political heterogeneity present amongst Italian immigrants only heightened with time, perhaps due to the collectivity's increasingly social mobility. With their basic needs met and reasonable level of integration attained, Italian-Canadians, women included, could afford to disagree with each other, as well as distance themselves from the mainstream institutions, namely the *Congresso Nazionale degli Italo-Canadesi* and *Il Cittadino Canadese*. Nevertheless, Italian-Canadian feminists, like all Italian immigrant activists, aimed to improve the lives of their fellow community members, and honoured, at least in part, the traditions of their cultural heritage. "Capable of emancipatory change on their own behalf"<sup>147</sup>, Italian immigrant women were, in sum, far from the submissive, oppressed, housebound women that popular imagination has made them out to be.

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<sup>147</sup> Volpp, "Feminism versus Multiculturalism..." 1211.

## Conclusion

### Post-Migration Politics: The Political Integration of Montreal Italian-Canadians

From the years following the Second World War to the today, Montreal Italian-Canadians have demonstrated considerable interest in Canadian political life. It was indeed in the 1940 and 1950s that Italian-Canadian journalists and community leaders fostered a sense of civic duty and political interest amongst the immigrant masses. As a result of their efforts, several politics of Italian descent were elected to municipal office and numerous community associations were founded. By developing an institutional network and political ability during these early years, the collectivity was then well-positioned to defend its choice of English-language education in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as actively participate in the labour movement. Though French- and Italian-Canadians shared similar concerns with regards to the conditions of the working-classes, the two groups' interests drastically diverged in matters of language legislation, leading to considerable ethnic tension in Montreal. With opposing logics, Italian immigrants mobilized to maintain free choice, while French-Canadians pressured their elected governments to enact laws in order to mandate children of immigrants to attend French-language schools. A turning point in the political participation of Italian-Canadians, the language debate, firstly, provoked the unification of the community's institutions, and secondly, led to an ideological fragmentation, which was only compounded with the rise of the second-wave feminism, when the politically active Italian-Canadians divided once again, this time according to gender. There were, therefore, multiple Italian political communities in Montreal, each providing a unique means of understanding the collectivity's political participation.

As this thesis has illustrated, politically-active Italian-Canadians were strongly influenced by the Quebec context. In the 1960s, the Montreal Italian collectivity was enthusiastic with regards to the election of Jean Lesage. Also affected by the airs of change, the journalists of *Il Cittadino Canadese* encouraged the unionization of immigrant workers, and the *Movimento Progressista Italo-quebecchese* (M.P.I.Q.)

adhered to the ideologies of the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (C.S.N). Marco Micone was an impassioned *péquist*e, and the *Centro Donne Italiane* was at least partially modelled after the other women's centres in the province. Not only did these activists adopt the political practices of the majority, Italian-Canadians' political pursuits were in response to events unique to the French-speaking province, as well. Because of the language debate, Italian parents were strongly encouraged to close rank in order to best defend their interests. This increased unity led to the, perhaps paradoxical, political break-up of the community. While the *Congresso Nazionale degli Italo-Canadesi* pretended to represent all Italian-Canadians, dissenting members of the collectivity were pushed to assert, sometimes in a very public manner, their political differences. It is, nevertheless, interesting to remark that these break-away organizations and individuals remained committed to an Italian framework. Micone was dedicated to the ideal of a pluralistic, francophone Québec; the M.P.I.Q. sought the liberation of the immigrant working-class, and the *Centro Donne* participated in the flourishing immigrant and multiracial feminism in Montreal. Italian-Canadians' political participation has, thus, been far from uniform and, similar to citizens of all origins, were considerably divided.

Originating with the language debate of the 1960s and 1970s, the political heterogeneity present amongst Italian immigrants only heightened with time, due, in part, to their increasingly social mobility. With their basic needs met and a reasonable level of integration attained, Italian-Canadians, could afford to disagree with each other, as well as distance themselves from the collectivity's mainstream institutions. With time, however, the *Congresso Nazionale Italo-Canadesi* appeared to have also lost its legitimacy within the more established community. Claudio Antonelli, a regular contributor to *Il Cittadino Canadese*, conceded that one of the Italian collectivity's greatest problems was its "lack of unity". Nevertheless, as he stated, "the chaotic pluralism of the regional associations was perhaps preferable..." The umbrella organization's spokesmen, in Antonelli's opinion, did very little to counteract the predominant French-Canadian opinion of the Italian people. It even may have reinforced the "us" versus "them" rhetoric.<sup>1</sup> A plausible explanation for the *Congresso's* ineffective

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<sup>1</sup> Claudio Antonelli, « Chi parla per gli italiani?: I portavoce della comunità », *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 March 1980, 1 and 30.

representation, in addition to the mishandling of the linguistic and national questions, was the generational diversity present amongst Italian-Canadians. The institution continued to work in the name of all Canadians of Italian origin, which, by the 1980s, consisted of people who spoke only Italian, to no Italian, workers, to university graduates, born in Italy, or born in Canada. It was, therefore, impossible to address the interests of the members of the entire community, whose problems were lessening, essentially weakening the power of those in leadership positions.

Without a doubt, after many decades in Canada, Italian-Canadians, as a group and as individuals, women and men, had crossed the colour line.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the category "white" has never been necessarily "unified"<sup>3</sup>, but, in terms of employment prospects, native-born Italian-Canadians were undeniably in a position to benefit from the many opportunities of their country. As proof, poverty was virtually non-existent within the Italian community. In the social spheres of the metropolis, as well, Italian-Canadians were less likely to experience outright prejudice, apart from the usual stereotypes concerning the over-representation of Italians in organized crime. As long-standing Canadians, they were, therefore, free from the harsh realities of racism endured by citizens of Middle-Eastern, Caribbean, African, and Asian descent, who were now the majority of new immigrants to Montreal. The relative social mobility and acceptance of Italian-Canadians did not mean that the community was free from collective challenges. Though not nearly as serious as the rampant poverty of the 1960s, or the language debate of the 1970s, the identity crisis experienced by many immigrants and their children attracted more and more attention from *Il Cittadino Canadese*. In contrast to the 1950s, when Antonino Spada continually asserted the importance of participating in the social, economic, political life of Canada, precisely because Italian-Canadians were not integrated into Canadian society, journalists in the late 1970 and 1980s, appeared to be at a loss as to how to define the immigrant community, at a time when, relatively speaking, Italian immigrants were doing quite well. Moreover, the newspaper's contributors had the impression that Italians were accepted, yes, but not

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<sup>2</sup> Frankenburg, Ruth, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* London: Routledge, 1993, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, "Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 22 (Summer 1996), 329.

fully, because they were still, four decades later, classified as “others” in the French-speaking province.<sup>4</sup> Pointing, once again, to the specificity of the Quebec context, the consensus, nevertheless, appeared to be the adoption of multiple identities: Canadian, Quebecois, and Italian.<sup>5</sup>

Not only achieving a reasonable level of economic and social integration, Italian-Canadians, it could be argued, have also been effectively incorporated into the Canadian political system. The Italian political contribution has been particularly felt in Montreal’s municipal government, especially in the east-end.<sup>6</sup> Though well-represented at all levels of government, the political integration of Italian-Canadians, has, however, been called into question. Some may argue that politicians of Italian descent are, more often than not, elected in Italian-dominated ridings. Their municipal, provincial, and federal presence has been, therefore, a product of the residential concentration of voters of Italian origin, and, in fact, representative of ineffective public policy. Though not unfounded<sup>7</sup>, on a broader Canadian scale, it has been found that instances such as these are “the exception and not the rule.” Immigrant Canadians, most of the time, run and are elected in ethnically diverse ridings and Canada, it should be mentioned, has the highest percentage of foreign-born legislators in the world.<sup>8</sup> Although it remains true that Italian-Canadians are segregated in the country’s metropolises, very little concern has been manifested in this regard on the part of “majority” Canadians in recent years. Pointing to changing perceptions, both towards Italian-Canadians, as well as ethnic enclaves, *ethnoburbs*, as they are called, are no longer viewed as proof of failed

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<sup>4</sup> Claudio Antonelli, “C’è posto per noi nel Quebec?,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 30 March, 1978, 1 and 30; Claudio Antonelli, “Manchevolezze e generalizzazioni del ‘libro bianco’: le minoranze sono vittime di molte ingiustizie,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 21 June 1978, 1-4.

<sup>5</sup> Claudio Antonelli, “Chi siamo noi, a chi apparteniamo?,” *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 19 July 1978, 1 and 10.

<sup>6</sup> Micheline Labelle and Joseph Lévy, *Ethnicité et enjeux sociaux: le Québec vu par les leaders de groupes ethnoculturels* (Montréal: Liber, 1995), 297.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Maurizio Bevilacqua, the Italian-born Member of Parliament for the Ontario riding of Vaughn, was elected in a riding that is 56% ethnically Italian. Moreover, 21.4% of were born in Italy. Michael Adams, *Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Multiculturalism* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2007), 144.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

integration. Maintaining a vibrant communal life, often linked to living in an ethnic neighbourhood, has, instead, been, in general, viewed as a positive phenomenon.<sup>9</sup>

With a conspicuous presence on the Canadian political scene, Italian-Canadian political participation has arguably facilitated the collectivity's social integration. Since persons of Italian descent are well-represented at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government, citizens of all backgrounds have become familiar with the Italian community's contribution to Canada, Quebec, and Montreal, which has been not only political, but social, cultural, and economic, as well. Although some may question the nature of the Italian group's integration in a Quebec context, in particular those who associate generally strong support for the Liberals with a refusal of French-Canadian society<sup>10</sup>, on the whole, most would agree that Italian-Canadians have overcome negative stereotypes and are an integral component of all facets of Montreal life. At least, this appears to be the perception of the community establishment. Once again taking an active role in the political sphere, the *Congresso Nazionale degli Italo-Canadesi*, on behalf of Italian-Canadians, as current members of a long-standing ethnic group, submitted a paper to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, because the issues surrounding reasonable accommodation "reminded them of their own integration experience". The organization called on French-Canadians to remember that when Italian immigrants arrived to the province, there were neither policies, nor social programs, facilitating the acculturation and adjustment of immigrants, like there are today. As the document highlighted, it is "unreasonable to expect newcomers to integrate overnight". Emphasizing the importance of "dialogue" between all groups, the document concluded with a plea for the benefits of diversity, and then reaffirmed the Italian-Canadian desire to actively participate in the "important debates which define

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<sup>9</sup> John Zucchi, *Une histoire des enclaves ethniques du Canada* (Ottawa: Société Historique du Canada, 2007, Coll. "Les groupes ethniques du Canada," Brochure no.31), 21.

<sup>10</sup> According to Micheline Labelle, concerning immigrant voting patterns, "La faible intégration dans la société québécoise explique leur rejet du *Parti Québécois*": Labelle and Lévy, *Ethnicité et enjeux sociaux...*, 271. However, as Charles Taylor explains, "A society with strong collective goals can be liberal provided it is capable of respecting diversity, especially when dealing with those who do not share its common goals." Voting massively for the Liberal Party should fall under this theory: Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" in David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge (MA): Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1994), 94.

Quebec.”<sup>11</sup> As the Italian case has demonstrated, an historical perspective can, therefore, be greatly beneficial when considering questions of ethnicity, politics, and integration. All the more reason to adopt a multi-centric viewpoint when studying Canada’s past.

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<sup>11</sup> Le Congrès National des Italo-Canadiens, Région Québec, *Mémoire présenté à La Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d’accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles*. Montréal, novembre 2007.



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